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TESTAMENT  
OF INDIA

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INDIA AND THE PACIFIC  
THE CHALLENGE  
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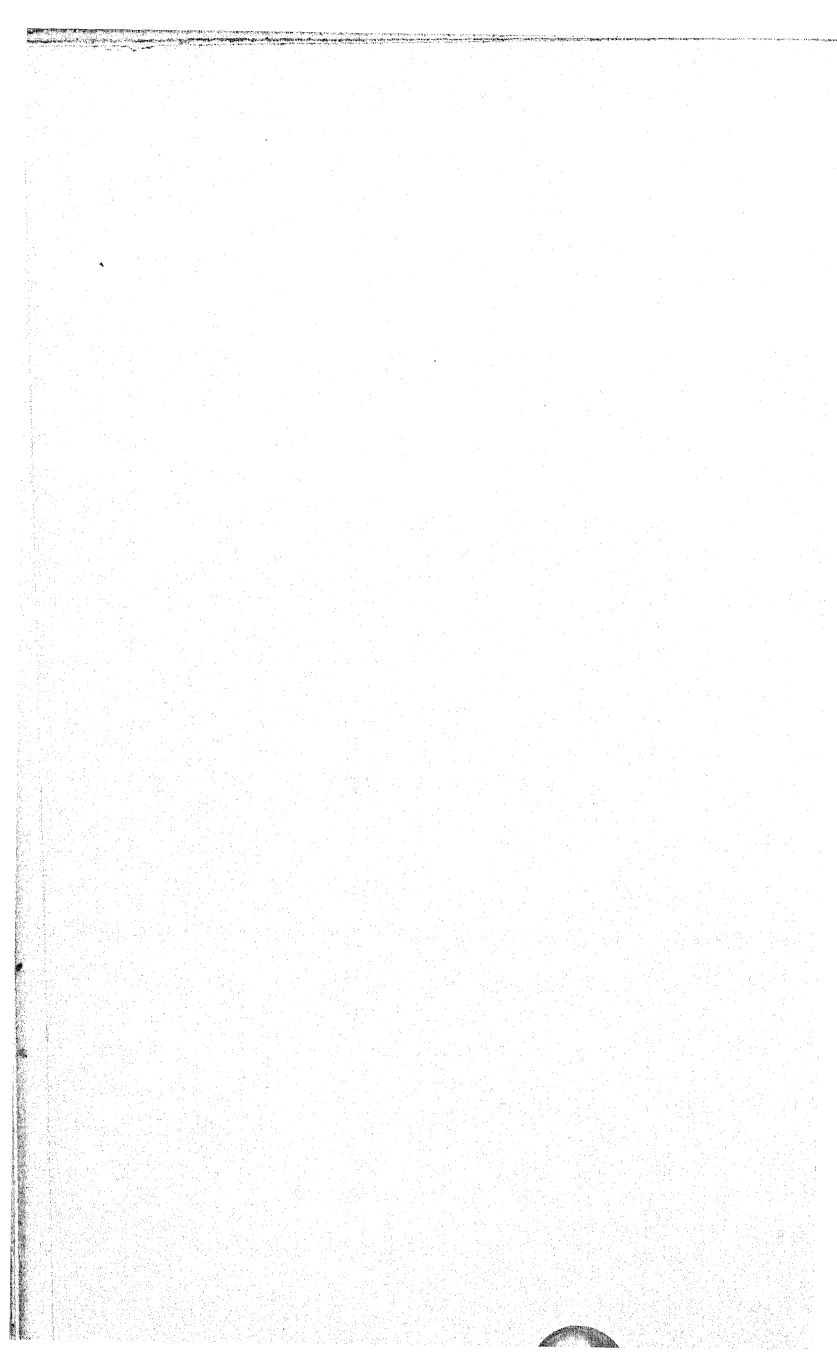
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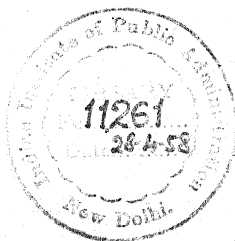
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# TESTAMENT OF INDIA

by

Ela Sen

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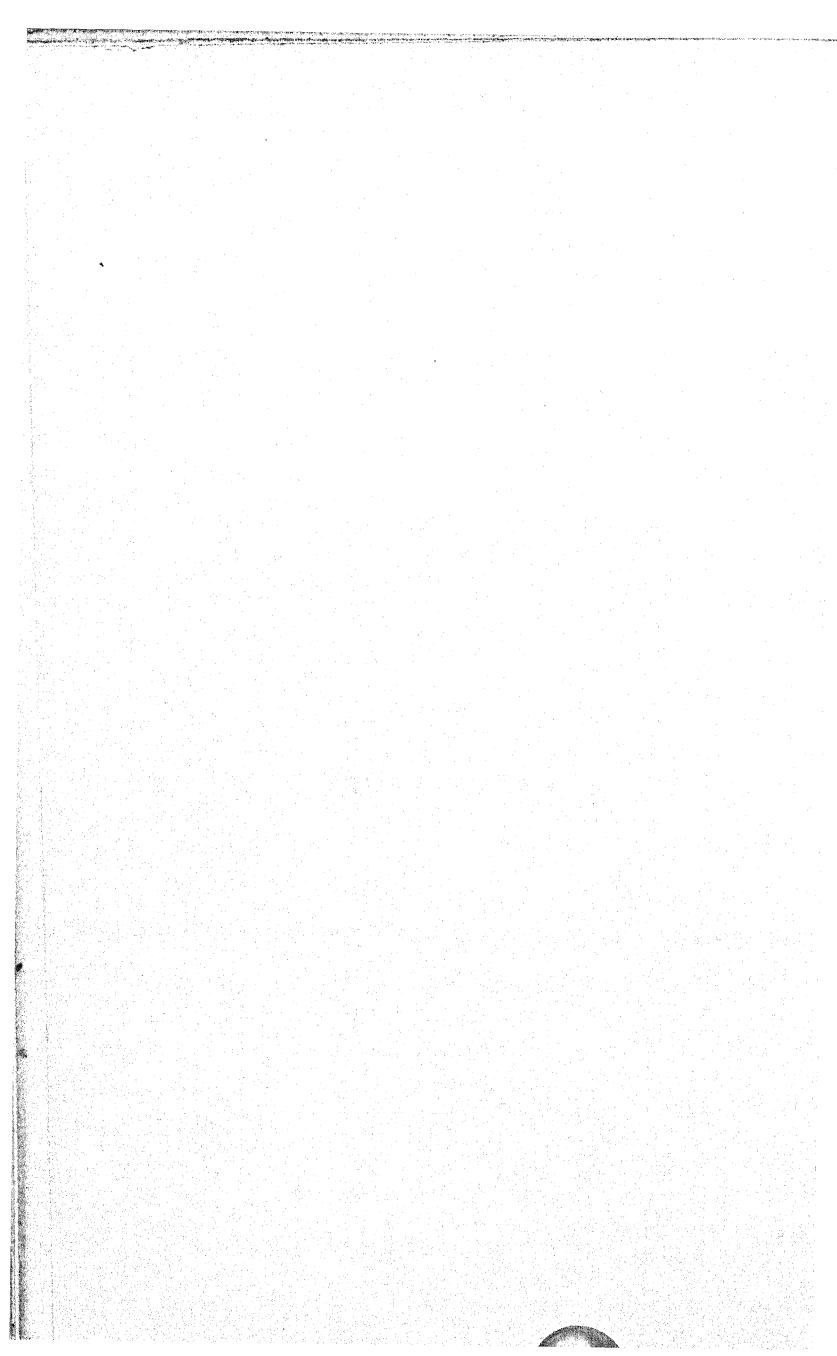


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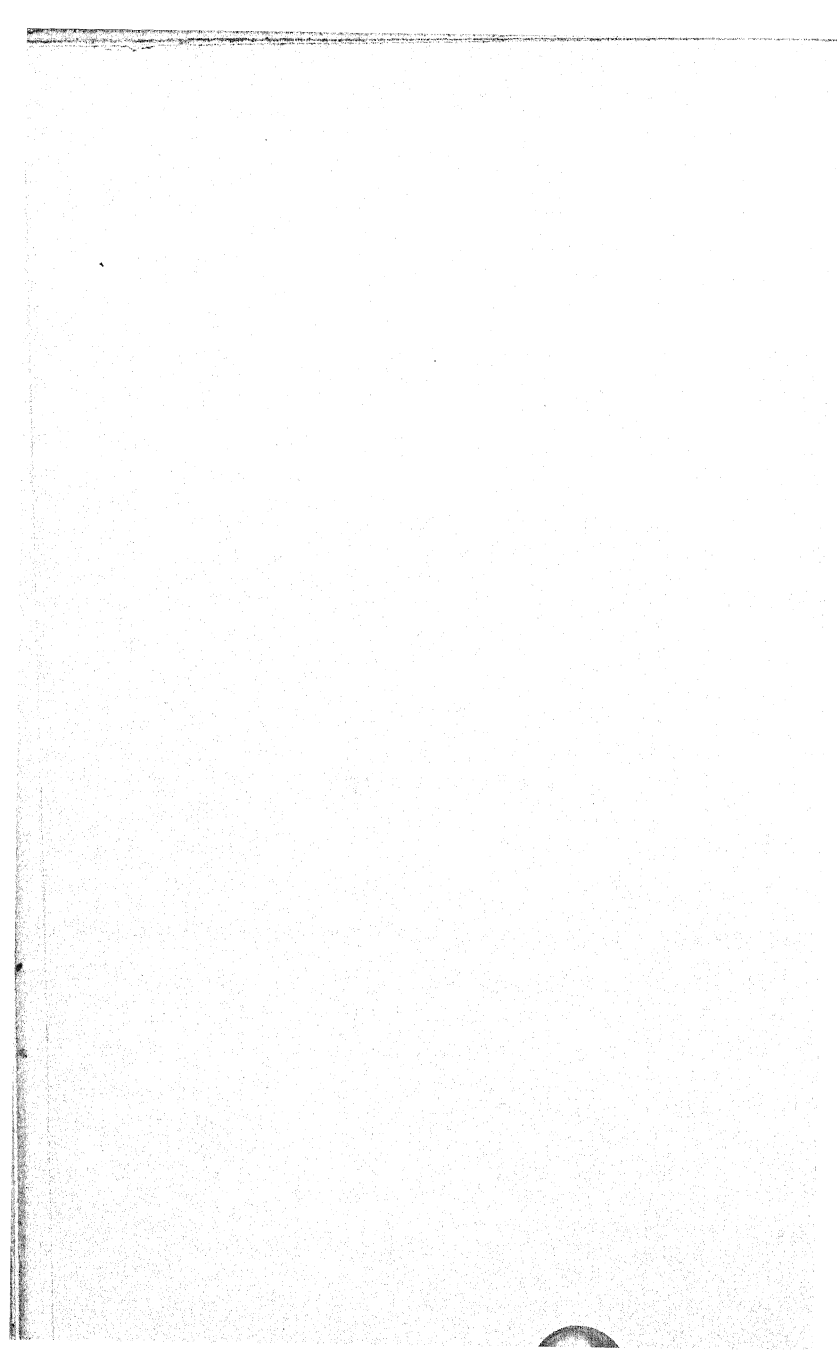


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To My Father

## INTRODUCTION

INDIA has had a very fair share in the chaotic changes that have taken place in many parts of the world since the close of the Great War, and in the following chapters I have attempted to put before my readers a few of the great problems that have been ours during the past twenty years.

The actual aims and aspirations of the vast masses of Indian people can be no better realised than by a study of their major problems, and, with this object in view, I lay before my readers a number of impressions from the lives and work of those personalities who are the acknowledged leaders of political thought in India to-day; and also deal with some of those great handicaps—such as Communalism—that stand in the way of achieving a happy and united country.

India is striving for independence and self-expression. Too long has she been suppressed and exploited by alien elements. With Britain, as a country, and with her people, she has no quarrels, but it is the sworn object of her great leaders—such as Gandhi, Nehru, and Subhas Bose—to combat Britain's Imperialism policy, and to secure for their country a recognised place among the nations of the earth.

To-day, out of eleven provinces we have a Congress majority in seven and a Congress coalition in •

two others. Under this régime most of our political prisoners, who for years were detained in prison, have been liberated; and our women, who not so many years ago were probably the most backward, so far as public life was concerned, of any in the world, are taking part freely in the political life of the nation, and they are treated and respected in the same manner as the men beside whom they work. These Congress Ministries are waging a great war against some of India's worst evils, one of which is illiteracy; they are giving relief to the agriculturists and protection to home industries, in order that the main question in India to-day—which is actually a very simple and a very primitive one, that of food—may at last be definitely tackled. Potentially we have one of the richest countries of the world; why therefore should we find, on the one hand, extreme poverty among roughly three-quarters of the people, and ostentatious riches in the other quarter? But India has awakened, and so the fight goes on day by day to set her and her millions on a level with the other great peoples of the world.

I should like to give one small example of this mass awakening. Amazing interest has been shown in a commercial museum that was opened recently in Calcutta. Evening after evening young men and women flock to the museum in large numbers. It is divided into two sections, one dealing with every kind of *Swadeshi* (purely Indian) production, while the other confines itself to the country's major problems—illiteracy, mortality, exploitation, and



public health. The establishment of this institution in the heart of the city has a great educative value. It is increasing the thinking power of the people, for it is safe to say that ten years ago such a place would have been an impossibility. But so far has political consciousness been awakened in each individual that it has become a popular study hall for the youth of the city.

In this march towards an independent India one question that has caused great agitation throughout the country is that of self-defence, especially when our leaders look towards the war-ridden and war-fearing nations outside. True, there is a most excellent and efficient standing army; but primarily it is intended to defend Britain's interests, though, it is pointed out, ours as well. But to a proud nation, striving to assert itself, it is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs to leave the question of defence in the hands of foreigners, for one hundred and fifty years of alien rule has reduced the people of the country to a hopeless state of unarmed defencelessness. Even now that India has been given so-called self-government she is left powerless to deal with the most vital questions, Army and Finance, the latter including railways and commerce. Full power in these matters is vested in the Central Assembly, whose composition is mainly still of the old bureaucratic order. These points are the most salient in the opposition of the Congress to Federation as it stands at present in the Government of India Act. But should Federation be forcibly imposed, there is a

great likelihood of the past tactics of civil disobedience being resumed.

When dealing with India's struggle one cannot but stress the great part played by Gandhi's non-violent, non-co-operative movement. Long ago Mahatmaji realised that it was hopeless for India to try to achieve her ends by attempting to combat violence with violence, and so he evolved his creed and worked out the problem in such a manner as to strike at further alien exploitation—in other words, by civil disobedience, which meant the non-payment of taxes, the propagation of *Swadeshi*, and through that the revival of cottage industries.

Since the day Gandhi returned from South Africa to throw himself into India's political struggle a great variety of views and ideas have come to the fore. The Right and Left Wings, the communal element, work taken by and on behalf of women, all combine to make up the political arena. But although all this represents a mass movement that has complete independence as its common goal, there are several internal problems that threaten at times to eclipse the major issue. Communalism is perhaps the greatest of these problems, and Hindu-Muslim unity is an ideal for which every true lover of India is at present striving.

As I have mentioned already, the question of food is acute. Unless one delves deep it is difficult to realise the extent of rural indebtedness and the impoverishment of the agriculturist. Yet there is a vast majority whose proper organisation would create

a great bulwark in the struggle for freedom. This is being done by the younger generation of Congressmen—the Socialist element. Socialism has definitely crept into the country and has come to stay. It is recognised that the reconstruction of India must be on a socialistic basis; but here again we have danger of rifts even in the ranks of the Congress, for the Younger Socialists are often at variance with the decisions of the Right Wing, and the latter on the other hand are apt to be patronising and impatient of youthful enthusiasm. But the modern generation of politicians, of whom Jawaharlal Nehru is the most important, have no longer allowed India to isolate or dissociate herself from the problems of the world. They have found for her a place in the mosaic of international affairs and are studying every political aspect and development in correlation with their own. Thus a great interest has been aroused, in the outside world, in the cultural and political development of the country.

It has therefore been my object in the following chapters to give some idea of the conflicting problems that have arisen during the past twenty years in India, where events have succeeded each other in such lightning rapidity. The words of a Congress Minister in this connection are very apt:

“We have been rebels. Now we have to adjust ourselves to new surroundings. We have to work within the four walls of the Government of India Act, against which we revolt with every fibre of our being. It is not easy.

"To my knowledge, there is no historical parallel to the circumstances in which we accepted office. A people struggling for national independence, meaning to continue to fight for it, stop half-way to accept administrative responsibility. This is a contradiction in our position.

"Constructive work, properly so called, can be thought of in terms of decades, if not generations, but here we may have to leave our places at any moment. So we have to devise yearly and six-monthly programmes and projects."

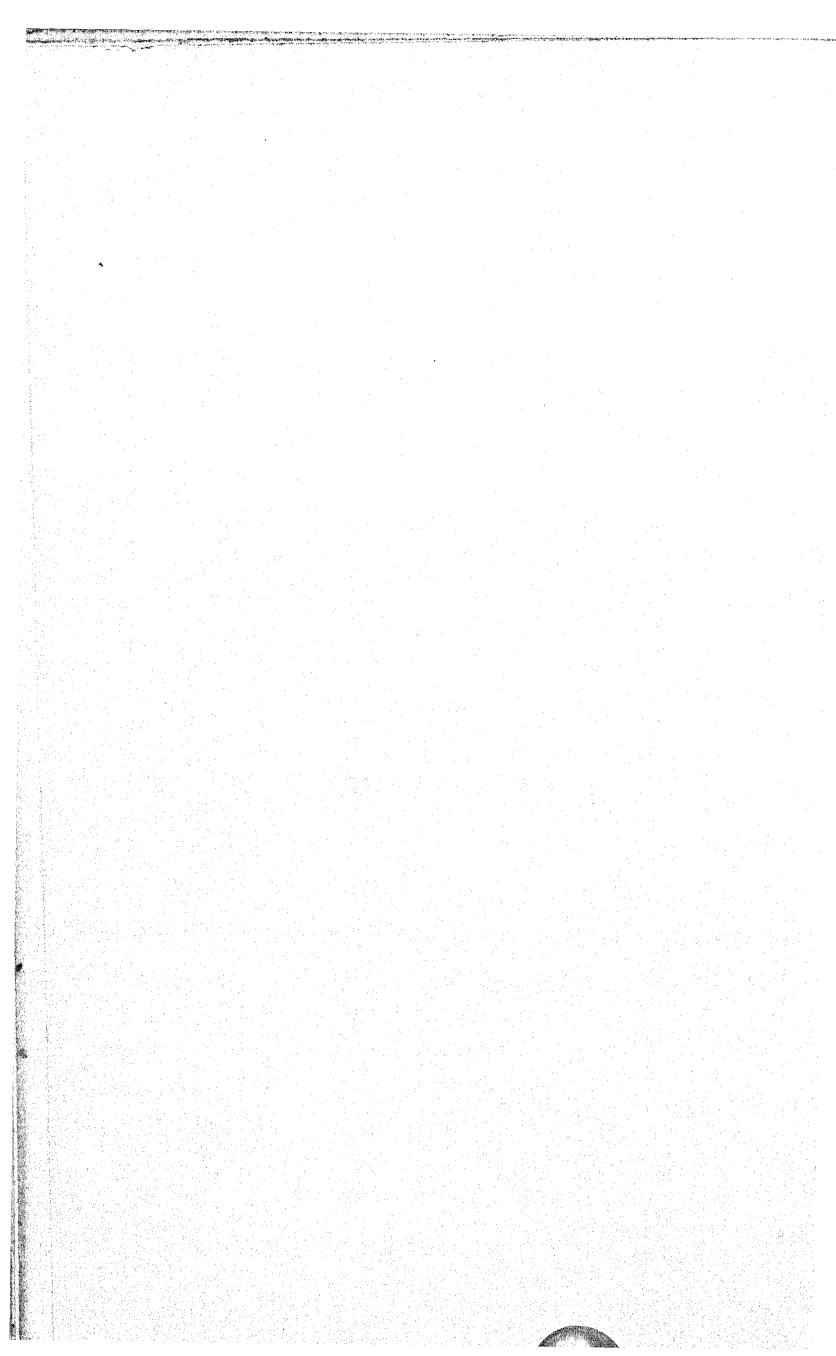
And so the struggle for India's freedom goes on.

In conclusion, I should like to make mention of the sympathy shown towards this work by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and S. Subhas Chandra Bose, to whom I tender my heartfelt thanks.

ELA SEN

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## Chapter I

# GANDHI

INDIA has paid a whole-hearted tribute to her great men through the ages; she has called them *avatars*, or incarnations of God. In a wider sense this term has now been applied to Gandhi, who within himself combines the twofold qualities of a saint and a statesman. Many a great man who has formulated a great scheme has lived to see his ideal fall into misuse, but, nevertheless, the world cannot withhold the homage due to its conception. From Woodrow Wilson originated the League of Nations, but the fact that in recent years the League has become but a travesty of its former self detracts in no way from the magnificence of the mind that framed this ideal. Similarly, even if Gandhi's ideal of non-violence had come to nought, nobody could have denied him the greatness that is his; what more when it has been accepted by 350 million people of his own country, and earned for him the admiration of the world?

Some years ago an incident occurred at Hijli Gaol as a result of which several *detenus* were shot down. They were all Bengalis, and at that time Bengal deeply resented the apathy shown by Mahatma Gandhi in this matter. But in the past year he has amply made up for that, and he left Bengal with the gratitude of her wives, mothers, and sisters at his

feet, for his assurance has been responsible for the release of three thousand political prisoners detained without trial in the Andamans and in gaols throughout the country. The present Government in the province did not think themselves competent to deal with three thousand so-called "terrorists" in freedom; not being popular the Government was afraid of its own safety. In spite of the repeated assertions on the part of the prisoners renouncing the cult of terrorism, they required the word of some leader of the Congress who would accept responsibility for their good behaviour. But even when Gandhi accepted this himself there were men who regretted the promise; others were anxious to keep their word, as well as placate Gandhi. But it was entirely due to the untiring efforts of the Mahatma that any solution was possible. He visited those *detenus* who had been repatriated from the Andamans, but were detained in the Alipore Gaol, Calcutta, and received from them this undertaking to abandon the violent cult of terrorism, accepting his creed of non-violence. In spite of his failing health his energy was untiring, and he did not spare himself until he had made the release of the *detenus* a tangible fact. Thus it was entirely due to him that the youth of Bengal once more came into its own, that is, attained its freedom from prison walls. Tear-dimmed eyes of their womenfolk are now raised in passionate love and gratitude towards the man who performed this miracle, and he is venerated as a saint more than as a politician. He has brought the



unbelievable, the undreamt of, to the homes of Bengal and gladdened the sorrow-laden hearts of its women. A great burden has been lifted from the people of the province, under the weight of which they had been tottering, for the lives of its youth had lain shadowed by a sinister cloud. And it is to Gandhi that Bengal owes the return of her banished sons; Gandhi who has lifted the cloud of sorrow that has hung over the province, that had crippled her in every way, when she lost the services of her ablest and most efficient men. Those who should have been in the forefront of the struggle have passed the best days of their lives in gaol, detained without trial entirely on "suspicion," and prison life has crushed out of them every spark of enthusiasm and energy. It will take them a long time to re-establish their own mental equilibrium and to regain the spirit that has been slowly but surely tortured out of them. Until youth regains its self-confidence and courage, Bengal must lag behind in the field of politics, where hitherto she has been foremost. A sense of freedom and security will gradually win them back to the life they left behind and accustom them to the change that they will see in the entire country. A new life awaits them, but we cannot blame them if they distrust it and the future which until so lately has seemed utterly blank and hopeless. But the night of gloom is over; Gandhi has brought a fresh dawn in its place.

The spiritual position which Gandhi occupies in the hearts of the masses is amazing, and still more

wonderful is the patience shown in awaiting a single glimpse of the man whom they consider a saint. During his last visit to Calcutta he was forbidden interviews and visitors, but he insisted that twice daily the gates should be left open to those who wished to see him. Thus at four in the morning and at six in the evening those who so wished were permitted to join him at prayer. It was touching and pathetic to see the streams of humanity that filtered through the most congested and remote parts of the city towards the house which sheltered Gandhi. Men, women, and children, rich and poor—some in motor cars, some on foot—would begin this pilgrimage, often as early as 2 a.m., so as not to be deprived of the privilege accorded to them. But when the strain of meetings led to a rise in his blood pressure, only a few at a time were admitted to the prayers. The crowd outside the closed gates presented a spectacle quite unique, waiting and hoping that perhaps the doorkeepers would relent. Very often they could be heard pleading, but the doorkeepers replied in tones of real sorrow, "Forgive us, these are our orders; what can we do?" Though the distress and disappointment of these people, who had perhaps waited for hours, was crushing in its intensity, they exhibited a rare spirit of obedience and restraint. In their very manner of gentle submission to discipline they appeared to fulfil the principles of the man they adored. It was their greatest tribute to him who had verily spent his life at the altar of his love for them.

Usually at these services there were a great many of all races and all descriptions. Fashionable women often came out of curiosity or alleged devotion to the Mahatma, but with them it was clearly a case of excitement, which subsided the moment they were away from his presence. His words had little or no meaning for them; they were saturated in luxury. The prayers were short and simple, composed mainly of songs from the life of Mira Bai. As I watched him one evening I thought that the life of every great man is one of long suffering, but that surely Gandhi has had a greater share of this and has borne it with a sweetness that is exemplary. Anxious to entertain him, several little girls inflicted atrocious dances on him; everybody was bored and rather embarrassed at this crude exhibition, but the mothers of the children were filled with pride, and Mahatmaji was genuinely diverted. His applause was hearty and his interest in the children genuine; he called them to him and patted their heads, praising their performances. His behaviour made us all rather ashamed of our own embarrassment and assumed superiority, for we realised that it was we who were guilty of vulgarity, even though within the secret strongholds of our minds. That is the effect he has on the average person, of making him realise his own shortcomings and of revealing his own littleness before his own eyes. Gandhi's little acts of gentleness, his innate courtesy and humility confront one with a self-realisation that is all-revealing. This is the psychological effect that

Gandhi, all unconsciously, produces by his own normal behaviour.

There was another amusing incident, which conveys a glimpse of Gandhi's mind and his shrewd sense of humour. On one recent occasion, when he had been so ill that the entire nation was in a state of perturbation, a lady of note was insistent in her demand to see him. She asserted that it was not for herself that she wanted to see the Mahatma, but for her companion, who was very anxious to do so. It was rather vaguely put, but had the effect of non-plussing the authorities, so that she obtained permission to enter his room. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I too slipped in, and was grateful to her, for I had previously found entrance a little difficult. Having made the usual salutation, we all sat on the floor where Gandhi was lying, his secretary on one side of him, a desk full of papers at his elbow. The lady expressed her great delight in being able to come and see him, and then proceeded to tell him how ill she had been. Engrossed in her own ailments she had no time to remark on the man whose ill-health had caused consternation throughout the land. With a twinkle in his eye Gandhi turned a sympathetic ear to her babble, and not the slightest note of irritation escaped him. It was quite a long time before she asked him casually, "And how are you keeping?"—as one might make a polite, formal enquiry. Smilingly, Gandhi replied that he was better, almost well, but some conferences were so exhausting and a "trifle" strenuous that

they usually left him worn out. She heard, but she did not listen, and plunged forthwith into further details about herself. Through it all he maintained an interest that was genuine, for it seemed a compliment to him that she should thus unburden herself. In the conceit of my own heart I was bored and intolerant, but in the greatness of his soul he found sympathy and toleration for all.

Impressions are often more instantaneous and indelible than the swiftest of cameras. Thus when after nearly fifteen years, perhaps more, I came face to face with Mahatmaji there were several things which I was more capable of analysing. Immediately it was apparent to me the amount of suffering that had been inflicted on that body, the amount of mental and physical exhaustion to which he had been submitted, the amount of energy that was still emanating from him who was by all ordinary standards an old man. Yet his body was upright even in its frailty, and though he had to use a stick he was not bowed, and the crystal-clear look in his eyes spoke not of age but of vastly matured wisdom. His entire self was lit by a spiritual luminosity that added to his keen sense of humour and statesmanlike qualities. He combines the heart and soul of a spiritual preceptor with the agile brain of a statesman, and it is this strange combination that looks out of his eyes. The austerity of his own living is such that he never allows himself to forget that the average Indian workman only earns six pice (roughly  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.) daily, and as the leader of such a nation he must not

partake of luxuries which they cannot possibly have. But this is no pose nor a bid for popularity, for then it could not have been the companion of a lifetime.

This small, frail man, singularly unattractive by ordinary standards of appearance, fills the rôle of a greater dictator than Hitler or Mussolini, with all their armies and armaments. He sways the countryside, not by fear or force of arms, but by love and unswerving devotion to the cause of the masses. His authority flourishes from one end of India to the other, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin; his word is law, not because of his might, but because of his great spirit nursing the good of his people. Dictator is too vulgar an epithet to be used with regard to him, and can only be done so comparatively, seeing that, at his insistence and teaching, age-old traditions and prejudices have been swept aside. A country whose population could swallow Germany several times, hidebound by orthodoxy and inbred conservatism, has countenanced the word of this man, who came to them not as a conqueror but as a suppliant to free them from the thralldom of prejudices. For it is at Gandhi's insistent demand that even the terrible and invincible barriers of caste have fallen apart. It was the most difficult task he had undertaken, for he rightly realised that social regeneration must go hand in hand with political regeneration. No country can hope to prosper if one faction is to live in the light while the rest is cast into outer darkness. Of all the social ills the condition of the "untouchables," as they were termed, called

for immediate action. Boldly and loudly Gandhi preached the doctrine of the brotherhood of man, and lovingly called to his side those whom the accident of birth had made into outcasts, who by no fault of their own had hitherto been treated ignominiously. He became their apostle, and as fervently as he had preached non-co-operation, as devotedly as he had championed the cause of political freedom, he now called for social freedom for all men alike. Those who had been labelled "untouchable" Gandhi re-christened "Harijan." This was to show that in every individual a divinity was resident, which his fellow men must respect, irrespective of man-made caste or creed.

In the beginning he was loudly denounced on all sides by those who dreaded infringement of their caste rights, almost in the same manner as capitalists fear Socialist principles. The difficulties in the path of Gandhi seemed unsurmountable, but with characteristic courage he faced his denouncers, as Christ long ago had faced his. The force of his personality, the solidarity of his purpose, and his pure disinterestedness gradually cleared his path of all obstacles, until in all parts of India, except in the South, temples and institutions were thrown open to "Harijans"—an unprecedented act. South India has put very serious impediments in the way of this reform, and even though in some parts it has taken effect, the majority still stands apart, aloof and suspicious.

Gandhi has been associated with the political struggle for freedom in India since as early as 1894, when perhaps he was one of the very few who were aware of the abominable treatment meted out to Indians in South Africa. The strained relationship between South Africans and Indians to-day may be traced to that year. His first step towards his public career was his courting of voluntary exile from India in order to remain in South Africa and help his countrymen in their struggle. Recognising the need of an organisation to watch over Indian interests, he sacrificed his chances of a lucrative practice at home and had himself enrolled at the Supreme Court of Natal. His first effort was to make his countrymen articulate, and in 1896 he wrote an open letter detailing their wrongs and grievances. At his insistence, during the Boer War Indians did great service to the British in South Africa, but in return conditions became worse for them in every way. He edited *Indian Opinion* in four languages, which voiced the views of the Indian colony there. During his long association with South Africa there were many happenings in which he took a leading part, not to speak of a virulent attack of plague, when his ministrations did not include Indians alone, and during the Zulu rebellion, when he organised aid for the wounded. But feeling waxed very high against Gandhi because of his continuous agitation for the improvement of the status of Indians. As a repressive measure, and to show him the fruitlessness of his efforts, a new law was passed in 1906. By



this, Asiatics had to register themselves by giving their finger impressions like convicts, and Indian marriages were declared illegal by the Courts. This fresh indignity to his race made Gandhi introduce passive resistance on the part of the sufferers. Thereafter followed a long and tedious struggle, during which he several times suffered imprisonment, and it was only after eight years that certain reformatory measures were introduced modifying the laws. And whatever was done to make the world admit the injustice, amounting to cruelty and indignity, inflicted on Indians was due to the constant endeavour of this one man, for without his leadership, courage, and perseverance nothing would have been possible.

It was an ill day for Lord Chelmsford's Government when Gandhi returned to India at the end of the Great War. Constitutional rule was on the verge of being launched—a rule that was constitutional only in name, and had been proved illusory and unworkable. Several repressive and shameful measures followed this. The Rowlatt Act in particular caused a wave of protest at its arbitrary powers, which placed the entire Indian people at the mercy of a bureaucratic Government, without any semblance or pretence of justice or enquiry. It was Gandhi once more who voiced the dissatisfaction of the nation. This was the beginning of the Non-co-operation Movement, which culminated in the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, when innocent men, women and children were shot down at the command of General

Dyer. The Punjab Government, under Sir M. O'Dwyer, not only countenanced this outrage, but wove strange tales of the gallantry of General Dyer, who had "saved the Empire for Britain." Later the British public fêted the same General Dyer as a patriot, as a man whose action had been misinterpreted; and in the meantime martial law reigned over India. Heart-broken women, whose husbands or sons had gone out and suddenly found themselves entangled in a mob and had never come back, disregarded the martial law and went abroad to the place of massacre to search for their loved ones. They too were shot down by soldiers whose distorted idea of discipline showed no mercy to anyone. Some months later, when martial law was removed, Gandhi plunged into this cauldron of seething humanity, to emerge the accredited leader of the Indian people. The breach between the existing government and the nation was complete, and neither side made any attempt at reconciliation. This was the final turning-point of nationalism in India towards the extremist point of view; there was no further thought of trying to bridge the difference. It was war of an internal, insidious sort creeping through the veins of the country and finding its way into every channel. It was a peculiar fight, for one side was all-powerful, while the other was completely powerless, except with the power that common grievances and unity wield. This was the beginning of Gandhi's non-violent, non-co-operative movement, which was to have a tremendous psychological effect on the masses,

unifying all under his leadership. This was the first decisive stroke at the root of bureaucracy.

Through the arches of the years, through light and shade, over many quicksands, Indian politics floundered onward, ever gaining ground. Gandhi dexterously showed the way; each step he took bred patriots; each fast he undertook brought more men rallying to his standard. Out of him and his plans of action rose men like Jawaharlal Nehru, who were later to show the country the way to socialism. Gandhi, whose training and example had influenced these younger spirits, never quite approved of socialism; he thought that India was still unprepared for it, and he advocated democracy. He remained the implacable enemy of British rule, for the Government never sought to placate him. When he demanded reasonable terms, they put him into prison; but when his demands grew sterner and more insistent, when all India called for redress of their wrongs with one voice—the voice of Gandhi—the Government offered him meagre consideration. Such behaviour not only led the way to disillusionment and estrangement, but was a blot on the much-vaunted British diplomacy. But in spite of his continuous betrayal by the rulers of his country, Gandhi loudly denounced terrorism. The fact that youth should throw his creed of non-violence to the four winds and sow the seeds of bloodthirsty revenge filled him with genuine sorrow. Never for a moment can it be said that the Mahatma supported those who committed these deeds of violence. In a

way this was a betrayal of him who had served his country throughout his entire life, gladly sacrificing his all at her altar. And Bengal was foremost in this. But why Bengal resorted to such an extreme measure, and what Bengal had suffered before the eyes of her young men and women, is dealt with in another place. Suffice it to say that she had suffered; she retaliated, wrongly maybe, and thus caused the ruin of nearly four thousand young people, the majority of whom were arrested on suspicion. However, again be it attributed to the perseverance, love, and devotion of Gandhi that these young men and women have at his word renounced the cult of terrorism and become pacifist members of the Congress. They have pledged themselves anew to the creed of non-violence; repression and the evils of prison life have had the one good effect of showing them the correct way to freedom.

Though the Mahatma is now not even an ordinary member of the Congress, his word still sways and will always sway popular feeling. It is the greatest tribute to him that he, who is no longer in the Congress executive, should still be considered the highest authority in all matters. During the recent controversy on the Congress acceptance of ministry under the New Constitution it was he who advised it, though Nehru and his younger group of Socialists were very much against it. They dreaded the evils of lucrative and highly placed posts on those who had hitherto suffered only hardship and prison, but Gandhi said that to smash the Constitu-

tion, to show how unworkable it was, Congress must be in it and try to work it. In spite of severe opposition from the Socialists, who feared lest those who had been placed there to bring about its breakdown should become merely cogs in the wheel of Imperialism, Gandhi's idea was to show up the futility of the New Constitution and to prove that, with the best will in the world, it was impossible to work it. He carried the day, and as a result of it, in nine provinces out of eleven there are now Congress Ministries, and they have become the cynosure of all eyes in India to prove that they are true Congressmen and not mere puppets influenced by Imperialism and the importance of their own position.

The word "Mahatma" means a saint or a great spirit, and it is as such that Gandhi is venerated by the people of the land. He has come to fill a spiritual place in their lives; he is called the "Saint of the Sabarmati," where he had his hermitage and colony of workers. It was a place of great peace where all were equal, and where all worked unitedly for the uplift of the Indian nation as a whole, irrespective of caste or creed. The Harijans are dearest to his heart, and he is tireless in his energy working for their needs, for alleviating their sufferings even a little. Religion has a primary place in his life, so much so that his zeal is often misinterpreted, as somebody once said: "As Mr. Gandhi grows more and more exclusive, Mr. Jinnah grows more and more communal." This is rather a faulty interpretation of a man whose religion is such that it

embraces all in brotherhood. He has shown that it is possible to be true to one's religion, yet maintain perfect freedom from communalism. His love and affection for all and sundry who unite to work for India under the flag of the Congress is amazing, and though he may not be progressive or a Socialist in his ideas, he is utterly free from prejudices of caste or creed.

At one time many people tried to influence him towards Christianity, as his soul was then seeking its correct sphere. But in the Bhagvad Gita—the teachings of Lord Krishna—he found his answer and salvation. He sought no more, but merely went forward towards his ultimate goal. Even when in South Africa he founded the famous Phoenix Settlement, where he used to practise asceticism. Of recent years he has established the Satyagraha Ashram, or the Hermitage of Truth. Its code is one of truth, continency, and all manner of physical and mental control, and of redeeming the "Untouchables" of India. His creed of non-violence can be traced as far back as his childhood, when he was brought up upon the doctrines of the Vaishnavas, which is *ahimsa*, and which forbade even the killing and eating of fish or animals. It was his mother who initiated him into the ethics of these teachings, and it is her influence that still lingers over him, making him the great man he is.

Time and again Gandhi has put forward the urgency of a common language for India, for it is hard to unify a country where so many tongues are

spoken. Especially in a land of such vast proportions, it is absolutely imperative to consolidate unity with the same *lingua franca*. He has urged the need of vernacular education, which is the only antidote to illiteracy that is the curse of India. That village industries, village welfare, and agricultural uplift are indispensable to the progress of the country Gandhi realised from the beginning. He has striven to establish mass contact, to find ways and means for rural reconstruction and restoration of cottage industries. His aim has been to put an end to foreign exploitation, to enrich the villages, and to solve the problem of unemployment, bad nutrition and premature death, for which the neglect of the soil has been responsible. The physical deterioration of the race has been largely a result of these factors, which have caused the impoverishment of the rural masses who form the vast majority of the people of India. Villages that were the heart of India were growing stagnant, and were being deserted for the overcrowded cities they fed. Cities offered a quick and ready return for value received, but the cumulative effect on man power and the indigent industries was dreadful to contemplate. India, potentially a rich agricultural country, had shamefully fallen away in this direction, and it was Gandhi who first pointed this out and exhorted the people to return to the land and build a better and wider future. He put great stress on indigenous industries, which cheaper foreign products had crushed out of existence. He deplored the slothful habits of those who

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only sought after comfort and did not scruple to impoverish a country so rich in material resources. He exhorted them to support their own native products, to abjure luxury for a while, to enrich the land, and to give greater impetus to the industries of the country. Where there was no demand there could be no supply; thus he asked everybody to demand of their own people, who would then have some incentive to produce. As a result of this India has made such strides towards manufacture and trade as she had not done within the past century. Consumption and response have brought forth such products as are fit to rival those of any foreign market.

Frail of build, but not insignificant, this great little man of the loincloth earns the praise and reverence of friends and enemies alike. It is impossible to withhold the feeling of devotion and love which he conjures up. In India he is not *Bapuji* (dear father) to his own children alone, but *Bapuji* to the whole country.



## Chapter 2

### JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

THOUGH comparatively young in the field of politics, Jawaharlal Nehru has given ample proof that he may be called the man of the moment. Greatness of this description extorts a terrible toll, which only the truly great can pay. But it is only when one considers the atmosphere of his childhood, of wealth and luxury, of his youth at Harrow and Trinity, that one can truly appreciate the high lights in his nature.

His father wanted to make of him a finished product of Western civilisation, and Jawaharlal's education and early youth were modelled on these lines. During that reactionary period in India there was a premium on English public school education, and the adored son of a rich father was given the full advantages of this. There is a controversy whether such an education was advantageous or not, but I am inclined to the belief that in this case it was, for Nehru through foreign education learnt to value that which was his own; having within him the seeds of greatness, he recognised the terrible injustice her sons were bringing to India's own culture and learning. His own neglect of it and his father's preference for Western culture taught him that he was but one of many who played a part in this betrayal of his country's education. Perhaps it

also made him realise the extent of foreign domination over his own people, who were ruled not only bodily but mentally. Indians thought British, felt British, applauded all things British, and even tried to act British, failing miserably in the attempt. People forgot the high ideals of India's philosophy, her cultural heritage, and lowered her prestige before the world in the feverish rush for Western education. They saw in it a speedy way of achieving a sort of learning; they swallowed in tabloid form all manner of Western thoughts and concepts, not realising that it was not in agreement with the Indian temperament. They lost all power of discrimination. It stuck in their throats and disagreed with them. Thus they achieved neither the one nor the other, but just a thin veneer of so-called culture.

Perhaps subconsciously, even in his carefree youth, Nehru felt that it was all wrong. Even in his Harrow days he was stirred by the happenings in his own country, but could give no vent to his feelings in free discussions, for he was restricted on all sides by alien elements. Nevertheless, he responded to the atmosphere of his English surroundings and imbibed the many sterling qualities of the British race. When he returned after seven years in Europe he was a full-fledged product of Western culture. Active nationalism was as far removed from his thoughts as he was out of harmony with the true atmosphere of his own country.

Nehru at that time led the soft, pointless, and fruitless existence of the son of a rich man, and a

great deal of his inherent enthusiasm toned down into an acceptance of the inevitable circumstances. He was only fairly interested in his work at the High Court, and generally dissatisfied with his surroundings. All this he himself attributes to his own "mongrel education." It is from this point that the evolution in his politics can be traced, though it was only gradual and unobtrusive at first.

It was while Nehru was a very young man that several forces were at work to change his destiny from perhaps a very successful lawyer to a patriot and a great man. The main factor was his father's change of ideas and growing trend towards nationalism. This was substantiated by the pitiable condition of his own people, which was becoming of vital interest to him. Though the Servants of India Movement attracted him, he was still in no mood to consider a complete revolution in his mode of living. His undying admiration for Mrs. Besant found expression in his interest in the Home Rule League. He was very gradually being carried on a tide of events entirely beyond his control, one which was to shape such a different destiny for him. This current brought about his meeting with Gandhiji at the Lucknow Congress in 1916, in the full flush of his South African experiences. One pauses to wonder what must have been in Nehru's heart when he came into contact with the greatest of personalities of his time. Did he look upon him with wonder and awe, as to-day the whole country looks up to Nehru himself? Had he a glimmer then that this was but

the beginning; the spark that was to light the flame of his own patriotism? His sombre life of one of a well-to-do bourgeoisie was once more disturbed by the fire of Sarojini Naidu's oratory, and he advanced still further on the path that fate had ordained for him. The stagnation into which he had mentally fallen was disturbed, bubbles of dissension appeared, which tended to crack the surface film that had fallen upon his mind. The stillness was broken, and problems, ideals, and ideas ravaged his mind. His life of ease and luxury, of inaction, appeared to him not only ineffectual and effete but criminal. The energy he spent upon his own pursuits seemed to him a sinful waste, since it could be expended in the service of his country; in doing something for the vast masses of his countrymen who lay under oppression.

By the end of the World War, when Gandhiji definitely took up the leadership of politics in India, the psychological metamorphosis of Nehru was complete. It was then that he took the most decisive step of his lifetime and threw in his lot with the Congress, of which his father had by that time become an acknowledged leader. He was no longer the boy who had dabbled in theosophy, in philosophy, and had discussed morality with the egotism of youth. Once he had made his decision, with an inherent singleness of purpose, he was determined to work for it, sacrifice everything for it and live for it. From that moment he realised that service meant the obliteration of self, and thus he was ready to

profit by the examples of renunciation and suffering all round him. The greatest and most brilliant example was day and night before his eyes—his illustrious father, the man who was so brilliant that he could admit to a mistaken outlook, and so brave that he had no scruples in adopting a completely different way of thinking. Thus with his father to guide his faltering steps, help him in his hour of trial and sustain him with the wisdom of years, Jawaharlal set himself out to prove himself the worthy son of a great father.

Soon after joining the Congress he was imprisoned, and since then a very large portion of his life has been spent in gaol. His youth was crushed by repression, which has left visible marks on the man. But out of the ashes of his lost youth has risen the patriot of the serene brow; the man is lost in the worker. Bureaucracy has proved the greatest friend of India in fashioning on her anvil the man it has made of Jawaharlal Nehru. Under its chastisement his soul has been reborn of a better and higher material, though he himself is supremely unconscious of it. It is his simplicity that is so attractive, and, what is more, it is not the mock humility with which many great men clothe their complacency, not a garment adopted to emphasise their importance. It is innate and charming in its naturalness, and at a glance one can fathom the inherent courtliness of that nature. Nehru could no more be pompous and proud than he could be discourteous.

His trials have been many, life has tried to break

him on her wheel, but through it all he has preserved a serenity of spirit that is perhaps comparable only with the moral strength of martyrs. Yet he is not one of those people who intrude their own affairs on those of others, not even the affairs that concern all of us. He exhibits such a sympathetic interest in the visitor that it creates a glow of comradeship. It means so little trouble to him and so much to the one who is anxious to speak to him. His consideration is a little return for the homage he gets, and because Nehru understands that he is dear to the heart of the people.

Sincerity of purpose during all the difficult times he has been through, undaunted by sorrows which Fate has relentlessly showered on him, is the ringing note of a character which has discovered its vocation. He once said that he was immensely tired, but he could not afford to rest, neither could the Indian people, for it was a long and weary way they had to traverse to reach their goal of perfect Swaraj, and there was no time for wayside halts. "The burden I have shouldered no longer appears a burden, it has become a part of myself, so I am just being true to myself," he stated. That is the keynote of his character—true to himself, true to his beliefs, his ideals, his principles. There is no conflict within the man, no doubts as to the integrity of his purpose, no indecision. He has the look of one who has faced and conquered all, even himself. Because of this sincerity and belief in his mission, he can go forward with a calmness that is as deep as the sea; no

breakers, no wavelets disturb its serenity. He is restfulness and graciousness itself in his attitude towards the world, for he appears to be of it but not in it, and because of it he has the power to fathom the turbulence that is in the heart of others.

As opposed to my assertion of sincerity of Nehru's purpose, there have been many who in the conceit of their own hearts have termed him "crank," "self-opinionated fool," "conceited," and, in view of the Congress Ministry question, "compromiser." He has even been thoroughly damned by the phrase "most ordinary"; and in that case one is tempted, yet afraid, to ask: if Jawaharlal is "most ordinary," what are we of lesser intellect and courage? Those who have sneered at him as "compromiser," as one who pays undue deference to those who have been friends of his father and hitherto served the country to the best of their ability and ideas, have failed to plumb the depths of Nehru's nature. While recording his opposition on the question of Congress Ministry he only preserved the solidarity of the Congress by his retention of its presidentship. People would have had him break away to show that he stood by his own principles, which did not fit in with the present policy of the Congress. They did not realise that the unity and prestige of the Congress, as representative of the Indian nation, must be preserved; that a disintegration within its ranks would be calamitous for the cause of freedom, that it was essential that all stood by the Congress—Jawaharlal realised these points. He did not sacrifice his principles, but the

matter was put fairly to the vote, his party lost, and he took his defeat manfully and allowed the policy to go through. Would it have served his country better if he had shown his own independence by producing a rift in the Congress? Nehru has learnt that "they also serve who only stand and wait," therefore lesser people who call themselves ardent Socialists sneer at his great spirit. If this be compromise, to preserve the unity of the Indian people, to give them the strength which alone comes from unity, then he is indeed a compromiser. Nevertheless, his type of compromise, if it be so, is beneficial to India, beneficial to mankind in general. He has the wonderful capability of giving honour and respect where they are due, of standing aside so that others may try. Nehru recognises that the objective and goal are the same, though methods are different, and he has sufficient courage to know that he himself is not infallible.

Jawaharlal is singularly free from self-aggrandisement. For himself he desires nothing; he merely wishes to serve his country. Recently it was circulated that he had been advocating the inclusion of a Vice-President amongst the Congress office-bearers, because he wished to preserve an executive post for himself when his Presidentship came to an end. Even those who circulated this realised how false it was, and how such a sentiment was utterly abhorrent to a nature like Nehru's. Fate and circumstances have thrust leadership upon him, the people have entrusted their problems to his care, and now



as a leader, true to his followers, he must carry on. They have complete faith in him, because they know that Jawaharlal desires no reward for himself, which he will find only when he has reached the ideal after which he is struggling. He has a mind detached from personal affairs and has risen above personal gain or loss after much suffering and many trials. Now he has attained an impersonality that marks him as remote from the petty concerns of small men; he is a worker, a thinker, a seer. The Utopia which his mind fashioned is the director of his energy; he has no other thought but its achievement. Yet he is shrewd and keenly practical; though an idealist at heart, he knows how to weld his ideals to the needs of practical life. The adulation of the populace does not sway him, but it is his entire absence of ostentation and directness of purpose that makes him the adored figure that he is.

Yet he is so human, his godliness shines in his very human behaviour. His shortness of temper has become known through the length and breadth of the country, but it is the temper of a child. For no sooner has Jawaharlal lost it than he is utterly ashamed of himself, and a childlike look of shame spreads over his face. At the last Congress Committee Sessions in Calcutta he was very annoyed at the delay in printing the abstract of accounts and the resolutions to be brought forward. As a matter of fact, they had not even arrived when he alluded to them, and was informed by the All-India Congress Committee that not one of them had received anything.

He reproached his secretary, who was responsible for this: he lost his temper; but it was noticeable that Kripalanis smiled at his chief's irritation, perhaps knowing how summery this storm was. And soon Nehru's exasperation gave way, and with a good-humoured smile he said to the A.I.C.C.: "The press has not sent any of the printed slips, I have not even the resolutions in front of me, so you can all just amuse yourselves as you please—sing, dance, or recite poetry!" His sense of humour is very keen, and he has a very shrewd insight into human nature. Throughout the entire proceedings of the A.I.C.C. meeting, a miniature Congress in fact, he created an atmosphere of informality—he treated it as if it was an ordinary meeting round a table. Though everything was carried on in accordance with the correct procedure, he infused an atmosphere of friendliness even into the most heated and irrelevant of controversies. His quick wit was apparent in several retorts to futile questions and assertions. On one member remarking that such and such a thing was not in accordance with the procedure in the Provincial Assemblies, Nehru replied: "And why should we bring this house down to the level of your assemblies?" After one particularly heated discussion, while one of the members was still addressing the committee, Jawaharlal was seen to look away distractedly; we wondered if that monotonous voice was getting on his nerves as it was on ours! He got up and walked on to the dais where the Working Committee members were seated,

looked at Kripalani without apparently seeing him. Kripalani still smiled; perhaps he too knew his chief did not actually see him. Then Nehru walked back to the rostrum, stood at the entrance with his hand on the railings on either side of him, still preoccupied. Suddenly before my amazed eyes he balanced himself on it, swinging his legs. Perhaps he too quickly realised how undignified it was for a Congress President to behave like a child, for he looked furtively about him, and then, with added gravity, strode to his chair. But it left in me (I do not know if others, too, noticed that little incident) a feeling of protective tenderness for a man who was still a child at heart. There is a queer feeling which is the outcome of watching the human Nehru; one feels that his sensitive soul must have been lacerated many a time by ruthless human hands, yet out of it, by dint of his own courage and perseverance, has emerged the patriot. While sitting through the long sessions of the A.I.C.C. I often wondered if Jawaharlal was actually attending to every one of the speakers. Some of them would argue irrelevantly and at great length; others would ramble on to an entirely different subject; quite a few gave lengthy and totally unnecessary dissertations on Imperialism—but he appeared to be listening to all of them. And so keenly did he listen that he caught them up on several points which were either unwarranted or unconstitutional.

Previously I had seen him on a platform as a speaker, I had managed to steal a half-hour's talk

with him privately, but at the A.I.C.C. meeting I first saw him in a position of authority. It was then that I marvelled at the discipline and strict order that he maintained, controlling a vast multitude with a single gesture. It is also to the eternal credit of the Indian people that they responded so readily to this authority; it also spoke of the unity between all castes and creeds under the banner of the Congress. Nehru, in spite of his gentleness, is a stern disciplinarian and will brook no breach of discipline, neither will he tolerate disorder; he wishes the people to conform to the rules and regulations they have accepted and adopted.

Jawaharlal is no orator; his speech is slow and his delivery halting. But the timbre of his voice and his manner of diction are so charming that one cannot help being enthralled by his speeches. They are not forceful orations; maybe if the speaker had had less personality they would not have appealed to the heart. From Nehru's lips these same addresses attain an entirely different value. Apart from this his manner of speaking is delightfully soothing; one could with pleasure listen to him for hours. The intonation which he infuses into his Urdu speeches makes an already mellifluous language exquisitely so, and even those who can understand barely the gist of it do not tire of listening. When he speaks in English, one often wonders whether a native of England could have an equally perfect manner of speaking. It is soft, gentle and harmoniously attractive to the ear, and there is some magic charm in it,

not of oratory or language, but entirely of diction and manner. What his speeches lack in masterfulness and power they make up a thousandfold in the unconscious and natural addition of personality, not to speak of the beautiful timbre of his voice, which has the effect of helping concentration and preventing the intrusion of superfluous thoughts. It is also, of course, due to his skilful handling of facts and their adjustments to the needs of the people that he gets such response from the masses.

There was a hawker selling handkerchiefs in front of the New Market, Calcutta, and we asked him whether he had attended the Hawkers' Meeting at the Town Hall. He said that he had been unwell and not been able to do so, but had been to the Congress sessions. This was hardly believable, and we proceeded to cross-question him; but he convinced us of the truth of his statement by repeating word for word Nehru's Hindi address on the menace of the importation of cheaper American cotton into India. It gave a proof of how far the movement had reached amongst the illiterate masses, as well as Jawaharlal's personal appeal to their hearts.

When the question of the "Bande Mataram" song came up, there was naturally a diversity of opinion. Of course, the original objection to its adoption as the national anthem of India came from the Muslims, for they could not tolerate the ideology contained in the last stanza. Bengal felt very strongly against its rejection or mutilation, and this opinion was to a certain extent shared by all the Hindus.

Since Bengal had in the past been in the forefront of national agitation, everyone felt that some recognition must be given to Bengal's wishes. Furthermore, "Bande Mataram" had come to mean something vital in the national life of the people: men and women had gone to their death happily crying "Bande Mataram," others had gone gladly to prison for the sake of "Bande Mataram," many had suffered inhuman tortures and through agonised lips whispered "Bande Mataram"—it was interwoven in every fibre of the being of every nationalist. Who could now contemplate its rejection from its place of honour as the national anthem of India? But there was the unification of a vast band in the balance. For this country of ours, which has tolerated creeds of every description, which has been the refuge of religious beliefs from persecution, this was a momentous issue, a final test of unity. For a small license on either side was there to be disintegration? This point Nehru summed up perfectly when he spoke in defence of the Working Committee's decision to retain the first two stanzas of the "Bande Mataram" and delete the others. A cry went up that the song had been mutilated, provincialism and communalism crept into the issue, calling for so-called justice. But Jawaharlal's argument was perfectly sound when he pointed out that the Indian National Congress stood for the Indian people as a whole, irrespective of caste or creed. As such, the last stanza of "Bande Mataram" conjured up visions of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati and thoughts of religion which were

dangerously capable of leading one's ideas towards communalism—the terrible festering sore that has marred the fair face of India. The Congress was fighting this loathsome disease that was sapping the vitality of the nation, and therefore sought to prevent its further aggressions. Thus it became a matter of mutual adjustment that the song should be retained, but, for the satisfaction of the objectors, the last stanzas should be deleted. The intolerant and the bigoted will never understand any compromise however beneficial, and later on when the measure proves itself right they will still voice disapproval, refusing to see reason. But to the mind which the new India is creating Nehru's appears a very rational view, and it also seems perfectly right that one should submerge caste, creed, and provincialism in the cause of the land which belongs to us. If only all could think in terms of India, then indeed would the work of the Congress not have been in vain, for that is the first step towards the attainment of real Swaraj. Disunion and pettiness in the ranks are responsible for much; they lay us open to exploitation by others for their own interests.

Fate forced Jawaharlal into politics. He has filled a blank in the national life of India and given her a newer outlook and a wider range of thoughts and ideals. He has sown the seeds of socialism earnestly; maybe when they bear fruit he himself will be crushed under it. But one often wonders whether what politics have gained has not been a severe loss to the Indian intellectual life. Nehru is a princely

intellectual, one who is not hidebound; his vision is not restricted to the hearthside, it travels far and wide. The horizon of his outlook is boundless, but there are very few who can gauge with the same perspective, so he remains misunderstood by many. His literary works, especially his Autobiography, have put him in the forefront of the literary men of his time. This is acknowledged the world over, and there is one thing peculiar to his own biography which most autobiographies lack, which is that it is singularly balanced. It is as if Jawaharlal had taken a deliberate bird's-eye view of himself, and then put it down on paper. It is devoid of self-praise, neither has it a quality of mock modesty. He, as an author, has set down facts about himself, the man.

Nehru is very sympathetic towards all journalists, and women writers in particular, for he knows the difficult conditions under which they have to labour. It is true, says Jawaharlal, that a journalist is born and not made, that one cannot learn journalism, but achieve it by experience; and whether paid or unpaid, successful or unsuccessful, a journalist must carry on. It enters into his blood, and he can no more help it than he could help being himself. But it is this that is exploited in India, and editors do not realise that journalists have bodies and souls that must be kept alive! It is also his firm belief that women should be given as many facilities as men in this profession; he has deplored their absence from regular journalism, and has definitely said their viewpoint would be most enlightening.



His faith in the womanhood of the country is great, and he firmly believes that nothing can be achieved without their co-operation. Men cannot expect to proceed alone without their help. He has cited examples of countries like Turkey, which had lagged far behind while her women were still restricted to *pardah*, but now the new freedom for women has led to freedom for all. Turkey is powerful to-day because her women are free to help their men towards power, because their help has not been scorned. India too must remember this and stretch out the hand of comradeship to her women, who had already proved their worth in individual cases. His deference to women, his real feeling for their deficiencies, and his actual and concrete sympathy for women's causes is another of his endearing qualities. Equal facilities for all, irrespective of caste, creed or sex, is not only his policy but that of the Congress itself, and the women of Nehru's family have all shown that they are fit to stand shoulder to shoulder with their men.

There has been many a time when I have wondered what was the secret of Nehru's sway over the masses. What was there about him that held one, that made one feel humble, that inspired one to better things? It was so elusive, yet so tangible, that perhaps it will not withstand analysis. Unknown to himself, Nehru is surrounded by a great many human barriers as boring and as invincible as officialdom itself, and I have a shrewd suspicion that my request for an interview found an untimely

grave in the basket of his secretary. But nevertheless, by mere strategy, I secured the interview, and went with very mixed feelings in my heart. Secretly I was afraid lest I found my idol with feet of clay, for I had heard it remarked by one person that he had been found most disappointing. But the moment I saw him all doubt vanished, and I exulted in my heart even before I spoke to him, for I felt my belief had been justified. We sat side by side on a wooden bench, and he spoke of so many things which he knew would interest me. It was not like an interview, but more a friendly talk, and he made it appear informal even for me whom he did not know. I was but one of a crowd of people he interviews daily, just one of many, yet at that moment he made me feel as if we had known each other for many years. He spoke of Ernst Toller, of his *Letters from Prison*, and told me that Toller was in London writing more plays in which his wife acted. Not once did he speak of himself or of those things which interested him; all the time he was the kind host to his visitor and solicitous for my comfort.

Nehru's humility is the greatest tribute to his greatness; he is utterly unmoved by his own popularity, save in what it means to the country. Personalities have ceased to interest him; he appears to have lost himself in the brotherhood of man. He has a superhuman energy for work, and in spite of that he is always his smiling, gracious self. It was touching to watch him at a women's meeting; there were great marks of weariness in his face, he could

hardly stand, but he spoke a few words to the women who had assembled hours before to hear him. Oratorically the speech was not great, but his thought for those who had patiently awaited him was most touching. He told them that he was tired, but here he was at their command. There were other leaders who came in to the clamour of "Bande Mataram," but went away after just showing themselves, while the disappointed women waited in vain. Maybe they are as patriotic as Nehru and as efficient, but they lack that innate delicacy and consideration that are his. Though flattery and adulations leave him cold, the devotion of his countrymen finds an echo within his heart for them.

Through the maze of life, through indescribable vicissitudes, Nehru is carving his way steadily, undaunted by obstacles. There is indomitable hope in his heart for the future of India; he has grown sadder but wiser through years of loss, bereavement and hardship, yet he ever courageously looks forward. The life that he has courted, so different to what his life might have been, has submitted him to indignity and torture, but through it he has grown into a better man; it has helped him to rise above the lesser beings who surround him. But he despises none, for he is unaware of his own greatness, and this unconsciousness is the surest proof of it. Whether his creed is acceptable or not, each and every one must acknowledge that of Nehru can be said what Shakespeare said of Brutus—"Nature might well stand up and say: This was a Man!"

## Chapter 3

### TAGORE

PERHAPS it is a little unusual to class a poet with political thinkers, but of Rabindranath Tagore it can be said that he is a great representative poet, summing up in himself a momentous era, and can well be expected to be the mouthpiece of our great ideals. India is in a strange condition of upheaval; she is a country in travail, and out of her womb she is bringing forth patriots, thinkers and saints. They have all been born in her pain, and perhaps they will perish in it too; but not one of them can escape being caught up in the whirl of turbulence she is generating. As such, Tagore, one of her greatest sons, though essentially a poet, has become one of the politically minded as well; and his authority and opinion are sought by all the great leaders of the land. This recognition is universal, and very often his words have an effect which is electrical in the turning-point of a cause.

His love for his native land, which finds passionate expression in innumerable poems inspiring ardour, is not just a blind sentiment. Only recently, during a controversy about the selection of a national anthem for India, Dr. Cousins of Madras suggested one of his songs, "Janagana Mana," which deals truly with the unification of all castes and creeds in this country of diversity. Tagore, however, had not

himself suggested anything, but had, on the other hand, urged the retention of "Bande Mataram" after deletion of the last two stanzas. The Muslim community had objected to the references to Hindu deities contained in them, and on the matter being referred to Dr. Tagore by the All India Congress Committee, he remarked: "I, who have the monotheistic beliefs of my father, also find it difficult to reconcile those lines." In this he showed not only a very broad outlook and liberal policy for a man not of the present generation, but also a spark of shrewd statesmanship.

Tagore is not merely a glorifier of the dead past; he firmly believes that "the old is in the new contained, the new is by the old explained." One must always respect the heredity of one's nation, the antecedents of one's race, and the gradual cultural development of one's country; but, at the same time, one must not trail behind looking backwards. His works voice this exhortation to India not to lag behind; she must be alive to the stir and bustle of the modern world. The past is there, he says; honour it, but do not live in it. He understands fully the race for progress and development that is the order of the day, that one must try and make headway against inimical tides, that nobody can afford to stand and wait, for it would inevitably mean destruction by stagnation. In the *Mission of India* he speaks of what he considers is India's part in the cultural development of the world: "We see that throughout the ages India's only endeavour has

been to establish harmony amidst differences, to incline various roads to the same goal, to make us realise the one in the midst of many with an undoubting inner conviction; not to do away with the outer differences, and yet attain the deeper oneness that underlies all such differences."

The poet, with whom Nature is a master passion, who pens the most beautiful of his poems about Nature in all her simplicity, was born, strangely enough, in the most congested area of the city of Calcutta. His home was a prison of brick and mortar, one of those old rambling houses of the city built for large joint families, and he indeed was one of such a family. On all sides he could see but smoke and dust; an unaesthetic, soot-laden atmosphere surrounded him in his childhood, but failed to oppress the verdant heart of the poet. The spring of his genius kept his life green and endowed him with a buoyancy which he has preserved even up to this day. His inner life could not be depressed by the inartistic surroundings of his home. Perhaps, because he saw so little of natural beauty in his childhood, he has prized it all the more during his lifetime.

The youngest son of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, Rabindranath lost his mother very early in life. His father was a great religious reformer, and a man of high moral integrity and courage; who, though born the son of a rich and titled man, faced utter destitution in striving to pay off every penny of his father's debts, and, of his own, to rebuild the

family's fortunes. Such a man was the father of the poet, and he endowed his son with many of his own qualities, which were to help in the blossoming of the son's inherent genius. Schooldays were not happy days for Tagore, as he could not brook the ordinary routine life to which he had to submit. His spirit longed even then to find loftier spheres, and the most pleasant memory he cherishes of those days is of a holiday with his father amongst the Himalayas. It was his first taste of grandeur and wild freedom, and his artistic temperament revelled in his first glimpse of the immensity and beauty of Nature.

When he was seventeen he was sent abroad, and entered University College, London, but could not settle down to the prosaic study of law. His heart was restless, and he could not find his niche in the mundane and commonplace affairs of life. He was restless, as if seeking something he could not find. Thus it was as a failure that he returned to India, and he was sent to manage the Shilaida estate of his father. Much as he disliked the enforced seclusion, he had to submit to it. He was married soon after his return from Europe, and, when still in his early forties, he suffered the loss of his wife, daughter and youngest son.

Even in his early adolescence Tagore nursed a deep love for the ancient literature of India, and fed his awakening genius on the lyrics of Chandidas and Vidyapati. At the very early age of fourteen he published his first opera, *Vahmiki—Prativa*, which

has remained a universal favourite to this day. Several original poems find expression in the *Songs of the Morning* and *Songs of the Evening*. Up to his thirty-fifth year Tagore wrote the most exquisite love lyrics that have ever been contributed to the literature of any land. They were simple in expression and thought, but through them ran a thread of idealism brought to the life of everyday persons. Poetry was no longer only for *littérateurs*; its appeal, by virtue of its simplicity in language and style, became universal. Critics lifted their eyebrows dubiously at this new phase in Bengal's literature, this departure from the orthodox—and Tagore's poetry went unrecognised by them. His love lyrics did not receive the honour that was their due, in spite of the words and music being so appropriately blended. The secret of this blending was the spontaneity with which they arose from his soul; he gave birth to these compositions in actual song, for word and tune were not fashioned separately. They remained the mirror of his thoughts, they were tinted with the reflections of his emotions. Even then these melodious poems were his greatest claims to immortality, which were later on to be acclaimed universally.

It was after the death of his wife and children that Tagore's poetry became expressive of deep religious feeling and the spiritual note crept in. It rose from mere lyrical beauty to heights of great strength and forceful conception. Meditative essays flowed from his pen, which he delivered in lecture



form during his tours in England and America. These have been collected under the name *Sadhana* (or *Meditation*). The immediate result of the poet's spiritual development were the poems contained in *Gitanjali*, which display every aspect of religious fervour, humility and submission to the Divine Will. This volume he translated into English, together with *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon*. The latter contained exquisite poetry, which he put into the mouths of mother and child to depict the well of love which lies locked and unexpressed in their bosoms. He reveals in it the wondrous relationship, not to be compared with any other in the world; its natural thoughts find an echo in the heart of any mother of any land.

In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel prize of £8,000. Until that time Tagore had not been specially acclaimed at home, but such is the human mind that foreign recognition evoked at last the great esteem of his own people. The same year the University of Calcutta conferred on him the Doctorate of Literature, though only a few years previously students were set passages from Tagore to be reconstructed into "good Bengali" in their university examinations!

The keynote of Tagore's poetry is mysticism and idealism, which once more reveals his claim to be considered a representative poet of the Indian peoples, for these are also their inherent qualities. Indians are a highly emotional and hyper-sensitive race, and Tagore has in his poetry displayed the

correct equipment for their interpretation. His lyrics are many-sided and show many aspects of beauty, which have individual as well as collective appeal, while being multiform in loveliness. His is the power of lifting the common and mundane things of this earth to a spiritual sphere with a simplicity which finds an echo in every heart. Through everything there runs a note of spontaneity, an absence of forced and stilted phraseology; it is the natural outpouring of a soul full to overflowing. The beauty which his mind absorbs finds its expression in haunting melody and actual phraseology. Tagore's poetry has a quality of refreshing simplicity, and familiarity only helps to rediscover special hidden beauties. It grows upon one with re-reading. The spiritual suggestiveness, which has earned for him a lyrical supremacy, fulfils the purpose of all true art in lifting man beyond himself into a higher and more ethereal region—to something akin to religious fervour. Thus he achieves the mission of Hindu genius, which regards all art not merely as an ornament of the soul, but as a means of raising the soul nearer to the feet of God. Tagore brings to us: "A tone of some world far from ours, where music and moonlight and feeling are one."

As compared with his poems his prose may seem colourless, though even there his genius shines forth in his short stories of simple, everyday life. They are absolute gems, perfect and flawless, revealing a sympathetic yet shrewd insight into human nature. Of his long novels, *Gora* and *Sesher Kabita* are of an

extremely high order; the former has often been compared with Kipling's *Kim* in theme, though the handling is totally different. The two cannot really be compared, as they reveal the different mentality of the two authors, so typical of their countries. Essays—both religious and descriptive—display a spirit of deep meditation, psychological insight and a lasting love of the beautiful. His *Glimpses of Bengal*, written during his enforced exile in Shilaida, show direct contact with village life, which is painted in delicate colours in a series of letters. They unfurl before us realistically the joys and sorrows of peasant life in Bengal, the people's tasks and pleasures, and the responsibilities of their heritage, which brings to them a certain freedom. Translations of Tagore's works, though they earned for him the Nobel Prize, lose much thereby, for the exquisite highlights of his tones are difficult to produce in an alien tongue. He has tangibly contributed to creative criticism, having accepted first and foremost the canons of Indian art. His has never been an appeal through the senses; he has never been a professional artist.

In the world to-day there are youth conferences and youth movements, but long, long ago Tagore realised the potentialities of youth, for they have always been specially dear to his heart. In them he sees the torch-bearers of his ideals and aspirations, the generation that will reap the harvest of his sowing, and he does not want it to yield them bitter fruit. Many of his poems reveal this tenderness, a protective yet unshielding love for the young. He

exhorts them never to lose the enthusiasm and courage that is the heritage of youth; he urges them to imbue even the aged with it and carry everything in its wake. Like all things green and tender, youth is beautiful and impetuous, he says, and must not be crushed. It is the young who are the future generation, to them are consecrated all the hopes and fears of those who go before. It is to this vast multitude who are following close on his footsteps that Tagore wishes to bequeath the light of his own achievement. And it is because he had their cause at heart that he founded his institution at Santiniketan. The entire sum of £8,000 of his Nobel award went towards the establishment of his school, where Indian culture, Indian history and Indian languages would find an honourable place. Its object was to add mass education, scientific, industrial and commercial, to the ancient system existing originally in India. The ideal was of large-scale nationalism, but at first it found no favour with the general public. It was looked upon as the scheme of a crank, not of any national value, for it sought to give a really broad education in all branches. Thus the task of establishing Santiniketan on a sound financial basis became a veritable struggle against great odds, but with superhuman energy the poet has made a success of it. Of later years this institution has attracted the general attention of the cultured people of the world, and visitors from all corners of the earth flock to Tagore's model seat of learning. The late Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, when touring India, paid his

homage to Tagore, and speaking of Santiniketan he said that it was no mere seminary for boys, but it was alive with the life of India, yet, not oblivious of all that was happening outside, it strove to share in the larger national life of India.

The curriculum of the *Visvabharati* (University) of Santiniketan embraces a vast variety of studies in all the branches of art and literature. The professors are recruited from people who have specialised in their own subjects, and thus have a profound knowledge of them. Languages are taught by teachers whose native tongues they are, and thus the staff at Santiniketan is cosmopolitan in character. This institution brings together people from many and varied lands, for there are students there from every corner of India, while, making the circle still wider, professors are recruited from other lands. The effect of this is a deeper understanding between the races of each other's manners and customs, familiarisation with individual habits, and sowing the seeds of world friendship, which is the only remedy in this world of warfare. If only this could be done on a large and universal scale between individuals of every nation, then indeed would one be able to visualise real peace, for it is only ignorance and want of understanding that breed war and give rise to cupidity and greed for power. With the present-day facilities for inter-communications there should be little difficulty in cementing cordiality between nations, but man's innate insularity debars him from the warmth of international friendships.

Even though Tagore brings together but a handful of people within the precincts of his institution, nevertheless the object is great and will perhaps yield in later years the fruit of inter-provincial and international amity, and especially in India do away with the bogey of communalism. Many well-known artists, such as Nandalal Bose, have made Santiniketan their home, as well as the greatest philosophers and thinkers of present-day India. It has become the haven of some of the greatest minds of the country to-day. Side by side with the finer arts flourish scientific, commercial, and technical education. Students are taught useful arts and crafts; many of them have been given scholarships and sent to study methods abroad with a view to adapting them to home products. The ideal has been to put as much stress on the fine arts as to those branches of learning which will make India a self-supporting country, so that every man and woman will be able to carve out a career for himself or herself. The teachings strive to instil ideas of citizenship, not only of a city or country, but of world citizenship. It is a process of nationalisation with the widest meaning, and one which seeks to broaden the outlook of the students.

Simplicity amidst rural surroundings is the keynote of Tagore's school, while strict discipline is maintained. The pupils are taught to dress simply and live simple but not severe lives. There is no asceticism, but great freedom of thought and movement. It is an institution for boys as well as for

girls; thus they are taught to look upon mutual companionship as something very natural and not furtive. This is a great education in itself in this land of *purdah*, and helps to give the woman and the man a totally different idea of their own capabilities. It is the readjusting of ideas amongst themselves.

The classes are conducted mostly in the open air, and all the rural festivals are celebrated with songs and dance. A typical performance is the Spring Festival in February, which is most artistically carried out *al fresco*. During the Monsoon Tagore brings a band of his students to Calcutta, where they stage a celebration of the Festival of the Rains. This is entirely in song and dance, while the poet himself recites suitable excerpts from his own works. The song and music are each year composed especially for it by him and brings to the smoke-ridden people of the city a refreshing message from the country they long to see.

The students build their own thatched houses, which are ornamented with frescoes sculptured by their own hands. There is a great lesson in self-reliance to be learnt from the Santiniketan school, which has as its objective freedom of every description. Tagore has striven to make it a great cultural centre, and the recent addition of a library of Chinese literature, presented by the Chinese Government, is a further sign-post on the road to higher cultural development. The poet has sought to revive the cultural ties once existing between India and China. Thus in the moment of China's great struggle

against the aggressions of Japanese Imperialism, Tagore voiced the message of sympathy from the Indian peoples as a whole. He exhorted them not to forget China, to help her even in India's own helpless condition; even in the midst of the great struggle that was engulfing her own people, India should not ignore these century-old ties between her and China which even time had not been able to sever.

In his earlier political writings he brought the message of freedom and emphasised the fact of India's need for independent action. The mental inertia that had resulted from years and years of foreign dominance, he said, had been responsible for characteristic dependency and inability to act freely. Indians were merely the agents carrying out the will of others, they were carving their own destiny as directed by others. Why should this be? He deplored a lack of initiative and energy in throwing off this yoke of mental dominance by a foreign element to the detriment of their own interests. The will was the will of the Master, the people had no say in that, and so deep were they in that stagnation that they could make no effort to bring about a change.

As a mark of his co-operation and sympathy for his own countrymen Tagore renounced his knight-hood during the non-co-operation movement of 1921. This was after the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, when the blood of innocents stained the glory of British prestige in India. This



was to register protest at the support given to General Dyer, not only by a section of the British public, but by the bureaucratic Government in India and those in its service. The poet, with his characteristic sense of nationalism, ceded the honour that had been conferred on him some years earlier. He felt it to be incompatible with his principles to carry the laurels conferred by a Government he held in dishonour. When he visited America via the Far East, he refused Canada's invitation to lecture there, because of the unfraternal attitude exhibited by the Canadians towards the cause of India.

The University of Calcutta, which had laughed and sneered at Tagore when he had suggested the facilities of education in the mother tongue and the evils of education in an alien tongue, at last saw the light of his reasoning. As a mark of recognition of him, who had primarily sponsored this scheme, the University invited him to address the 1937 Convocation. And for the first time in the annals of the University this address was delivered in Bengali. Tagore, however, with the innate courtesy that is his, forbore to remark that he had long before told them to adopt that policy. Instead he exhorted both students and authorities to give the highest place to their own languages, culture, history and art, and the mental outlook of the nation would thus be changed. That only by upholding that which was one's own could freedom be achieved, and India's culture was such a one as to bring pride to the heart of every Indian.

When the question of the release of *detenus* came up for discussion, Tagore it was who, in spite of his advanced years, vehemently appealed on their behalf. The youth of Bengal was languishing behind bars; many of them had never been tried; they were just detained there without trial, without even being proved guilty. Young men, who were the backbone of the nation, were spending their days in places where malaria and other ills were sapping their strength and leaving them wrecks. On behalf of those who were willing to renounce the cult of terrorism and work in co-operation with the Congress, willing to adopt its creed of non-violence, he pleaded.

It was only during his severe illness that the people of the country fully realised what his loss would mean to the nation. And it was befitting that the greatest tribute should fall from the lips of Jawaharlal Nehru at the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Calcutta. Before commencing the business of the Committee he brought forward a resolution, which was unanimously acclaimed: "This Committee felicitates the nation on the providential recovery of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, one of the greatest sons of India."

## Chapter 4

### SUBHAS BOSE

IN the political evolution of Subhas Bose can be read the gradual transition which transforms the peaceful youth of this country into revolutionaries. It is a transition that is inevitable in an intellectual and cultured race, and invariably begins with some minor disillusionment. The seeds are laid early in life, especially amongst the middle-class rich, who can afford the so-called European schools for their children. In reality, such schools are filled with Anglo-Indians, usually of low culture and parentage. With their infinitesimal drop of "white blood" and deliberate ignorance of the land of their birth, they treat their fellow Indian students with scorn and contempt for their "dark blood." From the school authorities themselves Anglo-Indians got preferential treatment, and the Indian child is at first bewildered by this, and it is sheer natural merit on his part that gives him a top place in class. Birth and breeding are of no consequence in such schools, which are dotted all over the length and breadth of India, and it was in just such an atmosphere that Subhas Bose began his schooling at the age of five.

Some well-defined memories of those early days still float to the surface of his mind, especially of the severity of his headmaster, who did not believe in sparing the rod. Upon the receptive brain of the

gently nurtured and sensitive child this left an indelible mark. Though he had anticipated his admission into the Protestant European School at Cuttack with pleasure, he was not particularly sad to leave it seven years later. It held for him none of those ties dear to childhood; there were no classmates he was particularly anxious to meet again, and, if anything, he was indifferent to the alien atmosphere that sought the repression of individuality. The life of discipline and the training in sport are the most commendable features of these schools and help to build up the youthful character on orderly lines. But it ever seeks to imbue a sense of inferiority into the Indian child by showing favour to those with European names, whatever their colour might be. This was carried to the extreme in Burma, where even ten or fifteen years ago such schools would not admit children unless they adopted European names for the school rolls. Thus it is not to be wondered that, under such influence, Subhas Bose developed an ultra-sensitiveness and reserve, and that he was not unhappy to cut himself adrift from it.

An entirely new phase of his life began with his entering into the Ravenshaw Collegiate School of Cuttack. But here he laboured under a serious handicap—his utter ignorance of his native language, Bengali. Ever since he had started schooling he had learnt English—in every form—and had been given no knowledge of anything indigenous. Though his proficiency in other subjects earned for him a high place in class, his Bengali was openly ridiculed by

his master and the other pupils. Sheer mortification and perseverance forced him to achieve a thorough mastery of the language, and he soon found himself procuring the highest marks in this subject as in others. Subhas Bose's academic career, from an early age till he finished up at Cambridge, shows a wonderful record of brilliancy. He excelled in all activities of scholarly life except in sport. This was due more to home influence, for his people did not relish the idea of free mixing with other boys of his own age. At this period of his life his would have been considered an unnatural and unattractive personality by most schoolboys, of a "goody-goody" temperament, obeying his parents scrupulously in all things, in accordance with the instructions in the Sanskrit Scriptures, of which he was a close and zealous student.

Religion and idealism played a great part in Subhas's life from an early age. He had a very sincere affection, almost amounting to adoration, for the headmaster of the Ravenshaw Collegiate School. This man had a great influence over his young mind, and ever stirred him to rise above his lesser self. Being himself a man of high principles, it was his nobility of mind that awakened such qualities in the youthful Subhas that were to stand him in good stead later on. He gathered round him boys of his own age and discussed the religious theories of Swami Vivekananda, and later on those of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. They were regarded as eccentric and abnormal, but in those days they were

very sincere in their ideals. Seriously they believed in the theory of Sankaracharya, that treated this world as an illusory existence above which human nature must rise. It was a happy existence, for in their religious studies and belief they found great comfort.

Politically, Subhas Bose's awakening did not come till he joined the Presidency College in Calcutta. During the famous bomb incident in 1908, the first of the terrorist activities, he was roused to momentary interest. But it was not a lasting or active interest, for he was immersed in his life at school. Round him he saw the propagation of *Swadeshi*, the advocacy of utilising home-made products, but he was not sufficiently concerned with it. Vaguely he remembers the visit to his home of a relative, who was also a police officer, and of the latter's horror at discovering the photographs of revolutionaries in his home. The police officer counselled immediate removal of the photographs, as otherwise his parents might be suspected of sympathy for the revolutionaries. Equally vaguely but clearly he remembers the disappearance of those pictures.

City life fascinated Subhas, and he still hugged to his heart his pet theories, though very often in his daily life incidents occurred which made it more and more difficult for him to reconcile his theory with practice. In tramcars he saw his countrymen subjected to deliberate indignities by Britishers and Anglo-Indians. Gross rudeness, amounting to inso-

lence, was often handed out to Indians, and such incidents invariably infuriated him. He would see Europeans put their feet up on a seat where an Indian was sitting, regardless of soiling the latter's clothes. Remonstrances and protests would be summarily dealt with, and Subhas's independent spirit could hardly treat of this as an "illusion." The final blow was struck by the O. incident of 1916, when Mr. O., of the Presidency College, manhandled some of the boys. The students retaliated against this indignity with the first organised students' strike, and Subhas was one of the leaders. As the Professor persisted in his ill-treatment, the boys took the law into their own hands and thrashed him. Though nothing could be proved against Subhas Bose, he was rusticated from the Calcutta University, and his disillusionment was complete. It was difficult to consider as "illusory" Mr. O.'s remark that he was the "greatest political nuisance" in the college, and that they were "well rid of him." All Sankaracharya's teachings lay murdered and mutilated on the doorstep of the Presidency College.

Soon after that, perhaps with the hope of eradicating the revolutionary tendencies in the boy, Subhas Bose's parents sent him to England. He went to Cambridge, and at their request consented to sit for the I.C.S. examination. Within six months he passed out, standing fourth in order of merit; it was an unrivalled achievement. Thereafter followed seven months of great mental struggle, which resulted in his renunciation of the I.C.S. Many have

seen in this step Subhas's love for spectacular action, but though it *was* spectacular it is unjust to say that it was prompted by any sense of vanity. He had not developed an "ego" in those days. One must appreciate and admire his courage, for it must have been a terrific struggle for him to forsake security, a lucrative and honoured service, and all that the world values dear, for a hazardous life pledged to the salvation of his country. It is not difficult to imagine what he had to face, including his parents' displeasure and disfavour, and it should not be difficult to honour him for being true to his ideals and convictions.

The path which he had of his own desire chosen was full of pitfalls, but Subhas was helped by the gigantic personality of C. R. Das. A leader in every sense of the word, Mr. Das found in this young man a worthy and competent lieutenant. He was full of enthusiasm and eager to help in whatever possible capacity. Bengal saw in him the potentialities of a great leader, a worthy successor to Das; but the untimely death of his leader, and the removal of the great personality under whose shadow he had worked so fearlessly and efficiently, was a serious blow to him. Out of it he emerged leader of a faction, not of the entire community. The very efficiency which had in spite of his extreme youth earned for him the admiration of the people became his greatest drawback. It developed into a spirit which could brook of no interference, such absolute reliance had he in himself and his own powers. This was the



most active period of his life, when time and again he pitted himself against the ruthless Imperialist policy, when over and over again he courted the rigours of gaol; this was also the time when he was least loved by the people. Those who admired him, and who in spite of everything continued to admire him, did so recognising the intrinsic qualities of the real man, and those who still had enough faith in him made excuses for him and thrust his better qualities before his detractors. Youth and his own superior intellect were his greatest hindrance at this time, and made of him the unlovely figure that he was not in reality. A concrete example of his unpopularity at this juncture is his defeat in 1928, when he was nominated as a *Swarajist* candidate for the Mayoralty of Calcutta.

Subhas Bose's contributions to the cause of Indian freedom have been manifold. He infused his vast personality into whatever work was required of him. When he was Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation, he personally saw to the efficiency of every department under him. Since his removal from office it has become merely sinecure; the Corporation runs it, it does not run the Corporation, as Subhas Bose did. His constant attacks upon Imperialism made him dangerous to British rule in India, for he actively carried on his revolutionary work in every field. He pursued his way with a great singleness of mind, never deviating from the path which he had himself chosen in preference to all others. His entire political career has been

characterised by boundless enthusiasm, which not even nearly thirteen years of intermittent prison life could crush out of existence. His body lies mutilated by privation and illness, but his spirit is still indomitable. Physical sufferings have, however, made him mentally richer and helped him to force out the pettiness of an egoist. Perhaps during those long-drawn-out months of interminable imprisonment, when night succeeded day with a monotonous regularity, devoid of variation of any sort, Subhas Bose had leisure to contemplate his own shortcomings. Maybe he realised vividly the ill-effects of his own egotism, which had lost him the affection of the people. Whatever it be, when he finally emerged out of his incarceration in March 1937, he had outgrown his deficiencies. The sufferings of his body were reflected in his tortured eyes, and his ravaged face was a sensitive index to the disease that had crept into his veins in the years of privation. But he had the exalted look of one who by sheer will power had conquered the forces within himself, who had driven away all things mean and small. Subhas Bose made a great comeback, worthy of his true self and justifying his capabilities.

An interesting situation was created by his non-co-operation, and Sir George Schuster was faced with a problem. On November 7, 1931, he was going to Dacca to attend an arrests enquiry committee meeting. At Gazaria he was met by Government officials and prevented from going to Dacca. They asked him to go back to Chandpur by steamer.

On his arrival at Chandpur he was presented with a bill of Rs. 7/2/- for first-class fare, which he refused to pay, asking why he should have to pay for coming to a place to which he had been forced to go. The authorities were in a grave dilemma and referred the matter from one to the other. From the Sub-divisional Officer at Chandpur to the District Magistrate at Tipperah, from him to the District Magistrate at Dacca the matter was tossed about. Finally the latter pointed out that, as it was not of his free will that Subhas Bose had gone to Chandpur, it was for the Government of India to compensate the steamship company.

On account of his alleged terrorist activities, Subhas Bose was considered dangerous to the State, and pursued relentlessly with imprisonment and harassment. As early as 1926, while still under arrest, he launched a libel action against the *Englishman*, which had referred to his "revolutionary and dangerous connections." He won an apology and damages of Rs. 2,000 (about £154). It was even brought forward in the open Assembly in 1934 that he was associated with the terrorist campaign in Bengal. The accusations were never proved to be more than allegations. Even though chapter and verse were quoted, they were neither conclusive nor convincing enough. According to Sir Maurice Hallett (the present Governor of Bihar, and the then Home Secretary), Bose's records had been examined by two judges, who held that there was reasonable ground for the belief that he was a member of a

revolutionary conspiracy and, if allowed freedom, would be a danger to the State, more particularly because of his public position and outstanding organising ability. It was brought up as further proof that he had started the Bengal Students' Conference in 1928, taken part in labour strikes, and put a Socialist policy before the Lahore Congress. But while this may be taken as evidence of his Socialist tendencies, it hardly holds good as proof of his "terrorist activities." As a final argument, Sir Maurice (then Mr.) Hallett brought forth some letter in which there were references to "Mr. A" and "Mr. B," and he informed everybody that "Mr. A" was Subhas Bose, but would not disclose the identity of "Mr. B." Because this letter showed that the Yugantar Party, who had been responsible for the Chittagong Armoury Raid and the Pahartoli outrage, supported Mr. Bose, it was concluded that he was the head of that party. No definite proof of any of these accusations existed, but Subhas Bose became the victim of one of the many ordinances prevailing over the country. Sir Henry Craik, the Home Member, with the restricted outlook of officialdom, also asserted that any Government would be acting with folly if they allowed a man of Subhas Bose's intellect and organising ability to put his views into operation.

Much has been said in criticism of Bose with regard to his falling away from public favour because of his personal outlook. But it must also be remembered that he was equally capable of rising to the

occasion and of great gestures. Maybe he did many things that were unworthy of the innate nobility of his nature, but when once he realised that people considered him as the root cause of dissension in the Congress camp, he had the courage to resign his office. When he discovered that strife, dissension and party feelings were lowering the prestige of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and laying it open to exploitation by enemies, and that he was considered responsible for it, he immediately gave up his position as president. He also resigned his aldermanship in the Corporation rather than allow the unity to be disrupted by struggles for leadership. It is true that he is a stern disciplinarian, and on this occasion did not hesitate to put himself under disciplinary action. During those days, when people lost faith in the man they had believed Subhas Bose to be, this action of his against himself stands out in high relief, intensifying the intrinsic value of the man whatever crust may have been formed on the surface.

After his return to India, after renouncing the I.C.S., Subhas Bose was not allowed to revisit England. During his visit to Vienna and Switzerland, where he was having treatment, he was denied a passport to Britain. But the ban was lifted in December 1937; he went to Europe for a couple of months to complete his treatment. It had been suspected by eminent doctors for many years that he was suffering from tubercular trouble to which the privations and rigours of gaol life had made him

susceptible. He had been removed from gaol to a sanatorium in 1932, but as soon as he was slightly improved he was sent back to gaol. Under continuous and prolonged imprisonment he broke down completely; he was permitted by the Government of India to go to Switzerland. This "humane" act on the part of the Government was due to apprehension that Subhas Bose dead was a greater danger than Subhas Bose alive, for his death would mean tremendous enquiry into the mode of gaol living and the treatment of political prisoners. The whole country would demand public enquiry, and the official structure might fare badly under close scrutiny. The insidious disease never fully left him, and even when he was finally released in March 1937 it was from the Medical College Hospital, where he was still running a temperature of 100°. It has been his immense vitality and his great desire to be of service to his country that have kept him alive, for slowly but surely his body has been broken on the wheels of Imperialism. He has himself never given quarter in his relentless attacks, and in return he has been shown no quarter. Force has triumphed over his body, wrecking his constitution and his health, but through everything his courage, patience and patriotism have remained undaunted and indomitable.

His last visit to Europe has been full of interest, and he was able to glean impressions of the European crisis from a detached angle. Even two years ago, when the rape of Austria had not been dreamt of,

old friends in Vienna told him that it was Czechoslovakia that was to be the starting-point of the coming European struggle, just as Sarajevo had been in the last war. In view of the execution of the Russian generals that year, Stalinists put forward the view that, while superficially it sounded horrible, it was a strategical move on the part of Stalin. Had he not extracted rebellious elements by their roots, it would have led to a fratricidal war in Russia. Spain might have been spared much if the Spanish Government had at an earlier stage dealt as effectively with Franco and his adherents. In England Subhas Bose had several interesting interviews, and testified that people there were very much more alive to Indian affairs now than they had been fifteen years ago. To several important personages he explained terrorism as a psychological fact, not just the exploitation of youth. His statements revealed an unusual aspect of the problem to people who had never had it thus explained to them before. Subhas Bose also found that Socialists were in a small minority in England; the Conservatives were by far in the majority. Some of the latter, like the Duchess of Atholl, had great sympathy for the Spanish Government—not, however, from a Communist point of view. It was due to a knowledge that a block of “Red” Powers would be England’s greatest safeguard against the Fascist aggressions, which were a constant menace to her and her colonies. He believed that a European war was inevitable, but that it would not be in the near future, not until

each nation had rearmed itself to the fullest extent. The sign of rapid rearmament was visible all over Europe.

Intensely brilliant as Subhas Bose's academic career had been, in spite of its hindrances and interruptions, he has not as yet made his mark on the world as a *littérateur*. He was for two years the editor of *Forward*, a progressive daily paper founded by C. R. Das, but that was ruthlessly cut short by his first imprisonment in 1924. His next attempt was in the form of a most enlightening book called *The Indian Struggle*, revealing unheard of facts in the case for India. That too suffered a premature death, for all its typewritten copies were seized by the Customs officials, and the importation of the printed copies into India forbidden. By the suppression of this book, which was to have been published in England, India is poorer in its true knowledge of the details of the Indian struggle, and how great it has been. At present he is engaged in writing his autobiography, which will perhaps give some idea of his own part in the country's fight for freedom. It has been regarded by many as a sign of his lurking egotism that he should undertake an autobiography, presuming upon the world's interest in himself. But if it is a frank and dispassionate statement of his life and the elements that have helped in moulding it, then it should be a most human document and of great interest to those who do know how inevitably his name is woven into the fabric of Indian freedom.



When Subhas Bose was elected President of the Indian National Congress in February last year, he was hailed by all as the youngest man who had ever sat in the presidential chair. As successor to Jawaharlal Nehru, he has carried on the work on the same lines as his predecessor. They have very many ideas in common; they both believe in socialism as the ultimate salvation of India, but complete independence is their first objective. Once that is achieved, socialism can be launched effectively, but until then everybody must concentrate on obtaining absolute freedom for the Indian people. Both Nehru and he urge the necessity of a united front against foreign domination. But the Socialist programme must be kept before the people to educate them *en masse* in the ethics of this doctrine. Outside Congress circles speculation had been rife as to the advisability of nominating Subhas Bose as President. Apart from the fact that his political activities and his sacrifices well merited this honour, it was Gandhiji who favoured his appointment. The belief runs that it was with a view to harnessing the two strongest Leftist elements, in him and Nehru, to the executive that he advised the presidentship for Bose, and urged the General Secretaryship (which the latter did not accept) for Pandit Nehru. Great is the honour and deference that is shown to Gandhi by both these men; never for a moment can they forget his tremendous contribution to the national cause, neither do they wish to dispute the leadership that is his by every right. His policy may differ from

theirs, as youth must for ever, in every age and in every clime, differ from age, but the benefits which he has conferred on India have earned the nation's gratitude, and the President of the Indian National Congress is but the mouthpiece.

In his presidential address Bose spoke coolly and critically, exhibiting judgment and foresight. He laid before the world the constructive policy of the Congress, once India was liberated from her load of alien domination. Above all, he pointed out that the present Working Committee of the Congress was the shadow cabinet of the future upon whom would devolve the duties of central administration in free India. It was ridiculous to suppose that Congress would cease to exist once liberty was an accomplished fact, for power to be judiciously utilised must be vested in the party that was responsible for its capture. If extraneous elements crept in, they would lack strength, confidence and idealism, which were indispensable to revolutionary reconstruction. The Congress Party would not evolve a totalitarian State on the leader principle; the existence of more than one party and the democratic basis of the Congress itself would be its greatest safeguard in that direction.

Giving an idea of the principles of future social reconstruction, Subhas Bose analysed broadly the principal national problems as the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease, scientific production and distribution. Any future national Government would have to work out a plan of reconstruction on

socialistic lines and should be divided into two parts—an immediate programme and a long-period programme. The former would deal with firstly, preparing the country for self-sacrifice, secondly unifying it, and thirdly giving scope to local and cultural autonomy. While uniting against any foreign invasion under a central government, the minorities must be given a large measure of cultural and governmental autonomy. The necessity of a common language and script was urgent, and, in view of bringing India into direct contact with the rest of the world, he suggested the adoption of the Roman script, as Turkey had done. It is interesting to point out here that Pandit Nehru also shared the same opinion to a certain extent. Even as far back as 1933 he issued invitations to his sister's wedding in the Roman script, and not in the orthodox *nagri*, or Persian script. His innovation had a mixed reception, mostly unfavourable. With regard to the latter half of the plan, Subhas Bose pointed out the gravity of an increasing population where "poverty, starvation and disease are stalking hand in hand." It was desirable to restrict the population of India until it had been possible to feed, clothe and educate those who already existed. A radical reform of the land-system, including abolition of landlordism, was absolutely expedient. Together with this there would be the liquidation of agricultural indebtedness and an extension of the co-operative movements, including cheaper credit for the rural population. A scientific basis would be found for agriculture. Apart

from these, industrial development under State ownership would be indispensable. However much one might dislike the evils of modern industrialism, one could not go back to the pre-industrial era; hence it was necessary to devise means of minimising its disabilities and developing home industries, which had hitherto been crushed by alien rule. The entire agricultural and industrial system must be socialised and expanded, both in production and appropriation.

Through everything he maintained an uncompromising hostility towards Federation as laid down in the new Constitution; principally because under it the people would still continue to be deprived of any power over defence or foreign policy, and the major portion of the expenditure would also be out of their control. Further, they would have no voice in the railway, currency and exchange policies, which were vitally connected with the economic development of the country.

Subhas Bose pointed out the necessity of making India and her culture known to the world through cultural and educational films made in India. "I say this because I am aware that such efforts will be welcomed in every country in Europe and in America. If we go ahead with this work, we shall be preparing the basis for our future embassies and legations in different lands. Developing international contacts does not mean intriguing against the British Government. We do not need to go in for intrigues, and all our methods should be above board. The propaganda that goes on against India all over the

world is to the effect that India is an uncivilised country, and it is inferred therefrom that the British are needed in order to civilise us. As a reply, we have only to let the world know what we are and what our culture is like. If we can do that, we shall create such a volume of international sympathy in our favour that India's case will become irresistible before the bar of world opinion. Ours is the struggle, not only against British Imperialism, but against world Imperialism as well, of which the former is the keystone. We are therefore fighting not for the cause of India alone, but of humanity as well. India freed means humanity saved."

The unanimous election of Subhas Bose to the presidentship of the Indian National Congress was in full recognition of the services he has rendered to India. The Left Wing in particular considered his leadership an asset to the cause of socialism. Everybody looked up to him to justify the trust they had placed in Pandit Nehru, and which they were now placing in him. It is the highest honour that the Indian people as a whole can confer on anybody.

## Chapter 5

### JINNAH

GREY-HAIRED, tall, shrewd-eyed, Jinnah is always immaculately dressed. His forceful bearing and presence cannot fail to impress, and he gives the impression of being a statesman to his finger-tips. At least the mannerisms he adopts are those of one, and so cleverly are they assumed that, unless one is hypercritical, they are apt to be taken as natural. One cannot but admire the clever lawyer and the brilliant politician, but there is a certain ruthlessness about him which convinces one that Jinnah is a desperate man in desperate straits. He has the appearance of one who is willing to stake his all on one last throw for leadership; which, even while he does so, he realises has slipped from his grasp. In spite of his assertion of the success of his work, it is apparent that his own self-confidence is shaken; but he feels that there is no other path for him; he has with his own hands blocked all other ways.

Jinnah is well equipped with the mental outfit of a politician; he had great potentialities within him, but he lacked the staying power that lifts one to the hearts of the people. During those early days of the Congress, when it was little more than an organisation that was confined merely to a handful of the upper classes, when it was more moderate in its policy than the moderates of to-day, Jinnah shone

as a star of hope in that firmament. They looked up to him to carry on that message which the Congress incorporated in itself. He was in the forefront of all its activities, for it was more of a social body and had not been counted very formidable in the political foreground. In the meantime he was becoming more and more successful in the legal world, dazzling his contemporaries with the brilliancy of his intellect and quickness of his wit. That was at the height of his career, when he represented, or gave the impression of representing, the most progressive way of Muslim thinking. People looked up to him as the leader of modern thought, the apostle of anti-communalism. Jinnah basked in the sunlight of popular fancy, for the way of politics had not become rough as yet, neither had the road started to wind uphill. It was still more talk than action.

From the time of Tilak the policy of the Congress underwent a radical change, and it stood to represent the definite political ideals of the Indian peoples—the ideals of freedom and equality. Those were the days of the Home Rule League under Tilak and Mrs. Besant. Perhaps it served as a shock to many members of the Congress, but even they little realised that it was only the beginning of a volcanic upheaval. Did Jinnah realise even then the revolutionary forces that were at work? If so, he gave no proof that things were moving so fast that he was being left behind. Nobody suspected, even for a moment, the reactionary elements at work in the man whom they regarded as one of the stalwarts in

their camp. Yet Jinnah was undergoing a sea change slowly and gradually but surely. Other stars were rising in the horizon of Indian politics, stars that threatened to eclipse the glory that had been his, stars that had been born out of hardship and suffering. Public opinion was also divided, largely veering towards the extremist policy. India was awakening from her lethargic torpor to the knowledge of her own needs, but this awakening was painful and entailed labour and suffering. At that time it seemed as if there were a long struggle ahead for the Congress, with no certainty of a triumphant issue at the end. It was a tedious and thorny path, entirely different to the life to which the brilliant lawyer had accustomed himself. Also he could not countenance a secondary position in anything—that was his greatest drawback. He must have full command of the audience, always he must play to the gallery. Now he saw the encroachment upon his preserves; no more was he the idol of the public, others had shown their right to a place in the people's affection. He severed his connections with the Congress at Nagpur in 1921, when he just dropped out of it. Soon after the Civil Disobedience movement started in 1929 Jinnah went to Europe on long leave and remained there for two years. It was the growing power of the Hindu Maha-Sabha, under Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, over the Congress that gave him the loophole and opportunity he desired. This body was highly communal, but there were other counteracting forces within the



Congress, which Jinnah refused to see. He, however, discovered in Communalism a fresh field for his exploitation, where perhaps he would be reinstated as a leader of prominence. It is to be said in favour of Jinnah that the attitude of the Hindu Maha-Sabha was loathsome in its orthodoxy and in its prejudice to any progressive-minded Indian of that time, and must have been peculiarly galling to the Muslims. But even at the height of its power over the Congress there were faint stirrings within, and other forces of a socialist and anti-communal way of thinking were making themselves felt. There were rumblings which boded ominously for the Maha-Sabha's power, for intolerance must crumble. But at that moment Jinnah struck, and became president of the Muslim League in 1934, healing the split which had occurred within its ranks. Within his own constitutionally framed mind he conscientiously considered himself a nationalist and tried his level best to bring the Muslim League, originally conceived as a counter-blast to the Congress, within its fold. It was then that he formulated his fourteen points, which are:

- (1) The form of the future Constitution should be federal with residuary powers vested in the province.
- (2) An uniform measure of autonomy shall be granted to all provinces.
- (3) All Legislatures shall contain adequate representation of minorities without reducing the majority or even quality.

- (4) In the Central Legislature Muslim representation shall not be less than one-third.
- (5) Representation of communal groups shall continue to be by means of separate electorates.
- (6) Any territorial redistribution shall not annex the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal, and the North-West Frontier Province.
- (7) Full religious liberty shall be guaranteed to all communities.
- (8) No Bill or resolution shall be passed if three-fourths of the members of any community in the particular body oppose such a Bill as injurious to that community.
- (9) Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency.
- (10) Reforms should be introduced in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan as in other provinces.
- (11) Provision should be made in the Constitution giving the Muslims an adequate share in all the services and in self-governing bodies.
- (12) The Constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim culture, education, language, religion, etc.
- (13) No cabinet, either Central or Provincial, should be formed without a proportion of Muslim Ministers of at least one-third.

- (14) No change to be made in the Constitution by the Central Legislature except with the concurrence of the states constituting the Indian Federation.

But ever since then this body has been responsible for fermenting communal strife under the cloak of sponsoring Muslim interests, and has proved the worst hindrance in the path of an united front against Imperialism.

Jinnah always asserted that he was a true nationalist at heart, that he had only the interests of his community at heart. He subtly stressed that Hindus and Muslims were different, their interests were inimical, they were bound to clash, and this was what he was trying to prevent. Everywhere he insidiously injected this venom of "differences." He had his legal brain and clever tongue to aid him. He even spoke tearfully of the "depressed classes" amongst the Hindus, and invited them to join the Muslim brotherhood where all were one. Hand in hand he worked with the Hindu Maha-Sabha, admiring their frankness in voicing communal feelings, actually trying to undermine the power of the Congress. But amongst the more thinking Muslims Jinnah's influence was negligible, and they swelled the ranks of the Indian National Congress. Jinnah flung a challenge to Pandit Nehru during his presidentship: "What is the Muslim strength of the Congress?" Imperturbably Nehru replied that as the rolls of the Congress were not arranged upon a

communal basis, it was difficult to reply offhand, but Jinnah was at liberty to pick out the Muslim names and find out for himself from the list. Sir Wazir Hasan, ex-Chief Justice of the High Court of Allahabad, said: "It may be hoped that the Muslim League parties in the Assemblies will co-operate in abstaining from election for the Federal Assembly. Perhaps I am hoping for too much, having regard to the fact that the Muslim League has placed communal interest first and freedom of the country as the secondary object of their political programme." These are the cultured types of the Muhammadan community—represented by Sir Wazir Hasan—who have been able to fathom Jinnah's pose.

There are others who have condemned in forceful language the activities of the Muslim League, and they are Muslims who have the true interest of India at heart, who believe in India for the Indians, irrespective of caste or creed. Maulvi Mazharli Ahrar, M.L.A. (Punjab), addressing a meeting of Muslims in Lahore has said: "We cannot join the Muslim League. We want to crush it because, instead of taking us towards independence, it is bringing us towards slavery." He also added that it had been urged in certain Muslim quarters that Muslims should unite to fight the Hindus, but he would advise them to unite in order to fight the "reactionaries." But the rag-tag and bobtail of this community see in Jinnah a saviour of their "cause," for he reverently speaks of the prestige of Islam;

they do not realise that he is but exploiting their inferiority complex for his own ends. He must be a leader, and, however it be, he must attain it. Long ago as a very young man, as secretary to Dadabhoy Naoroji, he had set his foot on the ladder of fame, and now in his old age he was not going to be set aside. Circumstances had proved too difficult for him, Congress had become too extreme for him, but in the Muslim masses he has found fields for fresh exploitation. His ambitions have found untold incentive.

Jinnah's greatest drawback has been his craving to be in the forefront of all activities. He is not of those who by assiduous labour climb to their exalted position, placed there by the grateful affection of the people. The waiting is intolerable for him, and he lacks the humility that comes naturally to the truly great. Egotistical to the core, for him there is nobody and nothing dearer to him than his personal vanity. Momentarily, under the brilliancy of the clever lawyer people are carried away, but only to recognise later that it all rings false. While he speaks he holds the power of convincing his audience, of focusing their attention on the force of his assertions, but there is the sensation of hearing a brilliant advocate giving truth and plausibility to arguments which are obviously incorrect. Through everything the personal touch is lacking, though his interest in you, me, or even his own community is not entirely assumed.

Above all, Jinnah fails to command respect. He

might compel admiration however unwilling, but his ruthless efficiency makes of him an unfriendly and unsympathetic creature. It debars from him those who would seek his sympathy, for he has placed himself far beyond the common herd. His rôle as politician appears to be spectacular; one associates him quite unconsciously with something stupendous, whether constructive or destructive. His is not the lot to work in obscurity; he must dazzle or be lost. It is not that he is inaccessible, for he is always willing to see those who wish to see him. But it is in his attitude—it is that of a great man granting an interview. It is the implication of his own superiority, greater intellect, and better knowledge that lurks behind his conversations. He imbues one with the idea that the only comment worth hearing is Jinnah's, the only sound argument advanced is by Jinnah, and the best conclusions arrived at are by Jinnah. Figuratively, with a sweep of his hand he wipes everything else away, wishing to leave behind only the impressions his words have made. He is self-sure and arrogant. But there is something regal about that arrogance which compels and repels at the same time. The light of his intellect shines brightly through everything and clothes him with a brilliancy which, though mental, enfolds him physically. Given the opportunity he would become as efficient and as ruthless a dictator as Hitler or Mussolini. Once he remarked: "Make me the dictator, put matters into my hand and I shall show you whether I cannot fill every high post in the land

with efficient Muslims." Fascism rings ominously through these words.

His frank expressions of his policy are refreshing in their absolute freedom; he conceals nothing of what he has set out to do and declares freely that he thinks the Congress is responsible for all the evils in India. He tries to convince his audience, and perhaps himself too, that he has made a vast and comprehensive study of the problems in this country, and that they cannot be compared with those of any other nation. True, as far as details are concerned; but, in general effect, difficulties must all be dealt with in the same way—by collaboration. This he will not grant. "Equality and fraternity" come glibly to his lips; he insinuates that his is the creed of tolerance, but even while he speaks there runs through his words a thread of insincerity, for he can speak only in terms of Hindu and Muslim, not of India and Indians. On fertile ground, at the psychological moment, he inserts his poison of "two vast groups utterly different in everything." Once he actually suggested that Hindus should wear Muhammadan clothes; that they did not do so was to impress their own exclusiveness and superiority. For a politician of his standing it was a particularly stupid remark, as there rose to my mind the thought—what were Hindu clothes and what were Muhammadan clothes? In that case there would have to be Parsi clothes, Sikh clothes, and Christian clothes. Which were we to adopt? In this manner his arguments lose ground with every ordinary person, for

in India clothes are determined by provinces not by religion. So much have Hindus and Muslims really intermingled in everyday life that in some parts, especially in the North and West, it is difficult to distinguish one from another. In the Congress everyone is dressed so much alike that, except for the actual names, no difference exists. Jinnah, like other communalists, whether Hindu or Muslim, has made of religion a national affair, while it is the personal affair of every individual.

Jinnah's early life and education are somewhat obscure, but he qualified for the Bar in England. Some light is thrown upon it by an ancient letter quoted herein, written by a contemporary of Jinnah's to the daughter of Mr. Manomohan Ghose, the first Indian barrister to practise at the Calcutta Bar. The letter is dated September 9, 1896: "Kindly tell your good father that Mr. Jinnah has returned to Bombay as a full-fledged barrister. I met him at a party only the other evening. I think it was all owing to your good father that proper arrangements were made for the call and return of the young man." When I placed this letter in Mr. Jinnah's hands, an echo from the past, I got the impression that it was a past he would rather forget. Not a word passed his lips about the dead man, who had also been a great man of his times. But the desire to play-act came uppermost in his mind, and he said with a deep sigh: "I wish I had never returned; I would have been happier then!" It was a cruel jar upon my sensibilities. After that I almost expected him to



strike an attitude—like a Shakespearean actor on the stage.

In middle age Jinnah became the cynosure of all eyes by a daring act, for which he was hailed as a hero and regarded as a sign in the skies. He married a Parsi girl, the daughter of Sir Dinshaw Petit—an unheard-of thing in those days, entailing great courage. People called him the "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity," and Jinnah enjoyed his position to the full, for it did not entail any great hardships. He became private secretary to Dadabhoy Naoroji in 1906, and later developed into a prolix and bitter critic of the Government. By his vigorous speeches he soon came to be acknowledged as the most aggressive exponent of suave offensiveness. But gradually this deteriorated into a pose, a love of play-acting, which detracted from his gravity as champion of his countrymen's rights. His methods have thus failed to make any lasting impression upon his opponents, and he has never been considered formidable in the political arena. The British Government, even in the days when Jinnah was at the apex of his glory, never took him seriously enough to consider restricting his activities. His violent criticisms, his elocution and thundering speeches were a bit of a nuisance to them, but that was all; he was too constitutional to be ever dangerous to the interest of Imperialism.

This must be said for Jinnah, that to a large extent he is the victim of circumstances which he has been too weak to combat. The sense of the

weakness of his own position has led him to the fermentation of a dictum and the adoption of an attitude which, in a man of his culture and special gifts, appears amazing. For, to his eternal credit, he it said that through his entire public life and career he has never sold his principles in return for favours done to him. The British Government, with its usual sagacity, determined that every man has his price, if only one is willing to pay it. With an eye to harnessing Jinnah to the cause of bureaucracy he was offered a judgeship in the Bombay High Court, which he refused. Thinking it to be not a big enough bribe, they offered him the post of Advocate-General, with private practice. But they were mistaken; Jinnah refused this also, and made them understand that he scorned to sacrifice his beliefs for such rewards.

His own successes at the Bar and on the platform have been his greatest handicap, in giving him a mythical valuation of himself. He is clever and acute, thoroughly aware of other people's weaknesses and motives, and quick to turn them to his own advantage. Jinnah lacks the broader vision and the wider outlook; his thoughts run in circles with himself as the centre. An inborn sense of the dramatic has at once been his asset and his hindrance. It gives him the faculty of at first establishing a sense of quietness at a meeting by a voice scarcely audible to the gallery. Then he just lifts his voice to the correct pitch, appearing to endorse certain arguments from the other side, but at the same time,

with an airy wave of his hand, he dismisses them as sound but irrelevant. Then, with deadly skill, he proceeds to lead the people off on the track which he desires to be trodden. But he has allowed this very power to get the upper hand of him, and has thus been a tragic failure. His too confident belief in his own judgments, of the meaning of the other side's assertions, have played him false over and over again.

A cynical bitterness surrounds him, as it must any man who is dissatisfied with his deserts. But beneath it there is a fervour about the man, who is, however, restricted from rising above himself. His own inferiority complex is his greatest enemy. He cloaks it with cynicism, arguments, pose and posture, but underneath his spirit pulsates, wanting self-expression and liberation. His egotism has barred the recesses of his mind and made of him the creature which his brilliant intellect and natural gifts have not deserved. Watching him in his struggles for supremacy, hurling bitter invectives, unworthy of his grey hairs, at people because in his mind he is only too conscious of their superiority, a sad reflection steals over one. Once the pride and hope of the nation, the exponent of national aspirations is now its bitterest foe, its unsurmountable obstacle: "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning!"

A short while ago Jinnah entered into a controversy with Jawaharlal Nehru, which on the part of the former degenerated into petty, public wrangling.

Pandit Nehru's quiet, dignified replies appeared to churn all the worst feelings in Jinnah and to infuriate him. He thought nothing of pouring out vituperation in the public press.

In his first reply, Pandit Nehru said:

"I am sorry that anything I have said or done should lead Mr. Jinnah to think that I want to function as a dictator. Far from dictating to others, I cannot even dictate to myself. I am a servant and worker of the Congress, carrying out its directions.

"Personally I find it difficult to think of any question on communal lines. I think on political and economic lines. But I should like to assure Mr. Jinnah and others that Congress attaches the greatest importance to the building up of a united India, and to the removing of the differences and suspicions which, unfortunately, sometimes affect the various religious groups. To that end the Congress will co-operate with all others, but inevitably that unity must have an enduring political basis. It cannot be a unity of subjection."

There is a finality and dignity about this reply, as much as to imply that he would like to end a futile discussion. But Jinnah, determined to carry on the war, amongst other things said of Pandit Nehru:

"To use his own words, 'the objective of the Congress is political independence, that is, the capture of the power by the people of India.'"

What, however, we fail to see is how from this Mr. Jinnah concludes:

"When that power is captured, he will by means of a Constituent assembly frame the constitution for India with a strong hand. When he was asked when will this be achieved, his reply was 'during my lifetime.' I wish him long life."

The irrelevance between the major premiss and the conclusion is so obvious that it is strange that it did not occur to the framer himself. The only other inference is that it did occur, but he had no other way by which to formulate a convincing reply.

In a further statement, Pandit Nehru gave another cool, dignified retort, which should have proved a check even to a pertinacious man like Mr. Jinnah. He stated:

"Mr. Jinnah has denied having issued any statement to the Jhansi-Jalaunpur-Hamirpur Muslim voters such as I referred to. I am glad to have his denial. But a Khilafat newspaper gives prominence to such a statement, and various other newspapers have published its English translation. I would suggest that Mr. Jinnah might find out who is responsible for this misuse of his name, and should dissociate himself from the statement in question."

Needless to say, no more was heard about the steps taken by Mr. Jinnah to disprove this allegation.

Referring to the controversy over the Congress drive for Muslim support, Pandit Nehru said:

"There has been no period when Muslim membership of the Congress has not been counted by thousands and tens of thousands. We do not keep separate communal records of members, for to

us a Muslim or a Hindu member stands on the same footing. But if Mr. Jinnah desires to compare the Congress Muslim membership with the membership of the Muslim League, I can have the necessary statistics gathered together. I imagine he will find the number of Muslim members of the Congress is enormously greater than the total membership of the Muslim League."

The controversy, which subsequently deviated into many side issues, originated with Jinnah's vehement assertions that the Congress had broken faith regarding the Pact of 1935. This pact was an arrangement arrived at by Babu Rajendra Prasad, the then President of the Congress, and Mr. Jinnah, affecting an adjustment of communal issues. Defending himself against these virulent attacks by the Muslim leader, Rajendra Prasad said that this pact was not an offer made by him, which Mr. Jinnah could reject or accept as he pleased; but that this was done by collaboration, which resulted in the evolving of a formula for a communal settlement. "There were several members of the Congress Working Committee at Delhi at the time, and they were in full agreement with me," continued Rajendra Prasad. "There was absolutely no difference among Congressmen, and I was successful in obtaining the support of the leaders, the Hindu Maha-Sabha and the Punjab also. But Mr. Jinnah insisted on having the signature of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and other *leaders* of the Hindu Maha-Sabha. This I was unable to secure, and the

matter had to be dropped. I had gone further and told Mr. Jinnah that the Congress and the League should accept the formula, and the Congress would fight those Hindus who were opposed to it, as it had fought them during the recent assembly. But this was not considered enough by Mr. Jinnah, and as it was impossible to fulfil his demand that the Hindu Maha-Sabha should also join, the matter had to be dropped. I dare say that Mr. Jinnah will himself recall this conversation. I kept full notes of the conversation from day to day, and they are in the Congress office."

In spite of this dissension, both the past and present Presidents of the Congress renewed the offer of a communal settlement to Mr. Jinnah. There was great agitation among the Muslims all over India, especially in the United Provinces, where several well-known leaders urged the acceptance of the pact. There rose a general feeling that Jinnah was making a serious mistake in refusing to accept the terms originally agreed to by him. People, especially amongst the Muslims, felt that the conditions which had caused the abandonment of the pact in 1935 did not now hold good. Jinnah had been apprehensive then of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and the Hindu Maha-Sabha, but those elements had by now ceased to count. But it was hardly likely that Jinnah would wish to arrive at any understanding with the Congress, lose his leadership, and be swallowed within the vast administration of that body. He continued his communal campaign relent-

lessly, crying out ever and anon that nobody would welcome a unity move more than he. Yet he never bestirred himself, save to churn up more communal strife, or come forward at all to put an end to a curse that was sapping the strength of the nation and laying it further open to foreign exploitation. He even flung this invective against those members of the Muslim League who had dared to oppose him:

"In conclusion, I want to say a word to the Muslims. Those few waverers who have betrayed us, or are about to do so for jobs, need not seek any excuse or loophole to justify their threatened secession from the Muslim League. They may go, but if they have a shred of conscience left, they should tender their resignations and contest the seats again on the Congress ticket. I am sure the Muslim League would be all the better without such men."

It may be mentioned here that all such candidates took Jinnah at his word and resought election on a Congress ticket, and 75 per cent of them were returned.

Into so many counter-issues had this controversy side-tracked that Pandit Nehru's last reply was somewhat wearily humorous when he remarked: "My difficulty is that I do not know what the argument is about!" It conjures up a picture of Jawaharlal Nehru, amongst his innumerable duties and despite his indefatigable energy, bewilderedly holding his head in his hands, maintaining his quiet dignity, whilst Mr. Jinnah's vituperations circle all round him, and whose fruitless arguments play havoc



with even the little repose which his duties accord to him. The coolness of Nehru's remark infuriated Jinnah to such a degree that he poured forth his wrath in a venomous speech:

"Is this evasion or ignorance? He then proceeds to patronise the Muslim League by saying that it has come nearer in theory at least to the Congress, to inform me that the Congress of to-day is different from what it was when I was associated with it. Well, that is my greatest regret, and that is why I am not there.

"But he proceeds further and gives us the result of his laborious mathematical task, and tells us there are 3,100,000 members on the Congress rolls, of whom about one hundred thousand are Muslims. I wonder what is intended by introducing the display of this great power of the Congress, when in more than one place he says that the approach to the minorities question should be a dispassionate one and should not rouse bitterness and hatred."

While Nehru, on the one hand, maintained an impersonal attitude, his adversary thought little of avoiding personalities. His arguments have so little that is original; he says the same things over and over again, and his spirit is not one of reconciliation. Peace must be had, but at Jinnah's dictation; his authority will brook of no interference.

Thus he fanned this controversy for over six months; from July 1937, and even so late as February 1938, all one heard of its issue was that a communal settlement was perhaps in sight. It would

have been a concrete fact long, long ago had the flames of conflict not been continuously fed by those who thrive on it. Congress puts forward the immediate policy of rallying together against the alien forces in this country, the main objective being independence. Once that was obtained there would be ample time for the regeneration of India on an equal basis for all communities. How could Jinnah contemplate such an end to his activities? The once "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity" had become the "Apostle of Communalism."

## Chapter 6

### SAROJINI NAIDU

EXCLUSIVENESS in every form—whether of caste or creed—has proved India's greatest hindrance towards progress, and provincialism and communalism have played an important part in this field. Thus, with the dawn of political consciousness and national realisation, has come the incentive for breaking down all barriers in the way of unity. Sarojini Naidu has been no mean factor in widening the range of national fellowship, both by example and teaching. But this is all the more incredible when one takes into account the fact that she was born in an age that was narrow and circumscribed in the extreme, when nobody ventured to look beyond his immediate surroundings and lived self-containedly within the small circle of his own narrow outlook. Those were difficult times for women, especially for anyone who dared to deviate from the orthodoxy of the customs of the land. A girl child of those days was supposed to fill only one destiny—that of a wife and mother; for any outside career was not only unthought of but considered unwomanly. It was during such a conservative age that Sarojini Naidu dared to be different and think of an independent career that has placed her in the front ranks of the women of the world.

In spite of her surname, in spite of being above

petty provincialism, Mrs. Naidu is a daughter of Bengal, and Bengal is loath to give up the privilege of claiming such a brilliant daughter. Though she may assert, and rightly so, that a diversity of forces have made her what she is, and Bengal's contribution to that is only proportionate, she cannot disclaim her birthright. But pride in one's ancestry, in the land of one's forefathers, should in no way stand in the light of one's international ideals.

Sarojini Naidu has been popularly called "the best-known woman in India"—a position she has well merited in the light of her intellectual and political achievements. She comes of a large family of brothers and sisters, all of whom are talented in some way or other. Her father, Mr. Aghore Chatterjee, though a Bengali, was more or less domiciled in Hyderabad, where he was known as a scientist of no mean repute. Thus it was a learned atmosphere into which Sarojini was born. From an early age she showed extraordinary scholastic ability, and she passed the entrance examination of the Calcutta University at the age of twelve. Too young to be sent abroad, she carried on her studies with her father at Hyderabad until she was eighteen. Then she was sent to England and joined King's College, London, and later gravitated to Girton College, Cambridge. In both places she left brilliant records of her scholastic ability.

From an early age she showed a marked flair for literature, which later found expression in beautiful poems in English. Her fluency in a language not

her own has placed her work on a par with those of the noted poets of England. Amongst her poetical works *The Golden Threshold*, written in 1905, earned a place of prominence for her. Though written in English, the spirit of the poems was typically Indian and full of a lyrical charm. The book was prefaced by Arthur Symons. In 1914 she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her works have been translated into several languages. Though now she is better known as a politician, it was as a poet that she first made her mark, and her heart has remained that of one.

Even where her political activities led her she unconsciously discovered hidden spots of natural beauty, where her poetic self could be left alone to commune. But on one occasion at least, perhaps unknown to her, this solitude was ruthlessly disturbed by an enterprising press photographer, whose paper published next day a picture of her with the caption: ". . . enjoying a few moments' solitude on the banks of the Berg River." Often she styles herself "a wandering poet," and as such she can visualise everything from an entirely different angle from that of her colleagues. She is extraordinarily quick-witted, and this enables her to find correct expression and epithets on the spot. On one occasion she is said to have called a certain person "the exquisite Mr. —," which was utterly true, for the person in question was handsome, intensely intellectual, and beautifully clothed. The epithet was meant more as a tribute, as its aptness signified. Her

sense of humour has equipped her with a ready wit and a clever tongue. When she was in South Africa, General Hertzog enquired why her countrymen did not repatriate to their native land; she remarked: "I might as well ask why you Hollanders in South Africa don't return to the Netherlands!"

Mrs. Naidu has a great aptitude for languages, and has been known to speak fluently on the platform in English, Hindi, and Urdu; but, unfortunately, never in Bengali. Having lived all her early life in Hyderabad and having married there, one can well understand that Urdu has become her adopted tongue, but can one easily forgive this neglect of her own native language? Is this to be the toll extorted by breaking down provincialism—that one should be unmindful of the tongue of one's ancestors? It is sad but true that Bengalis domiciled in other provinces appear to be ashamed of their own province—one of which they may well be proud; one which has ever stood in the forefront of all activities; one which has given birth to many world figures of the day. Only a decade or so ago it was well known that "What Bengal thinks to-day, India will think to-morrow." There need be no narrowness, no pettiness in this pride, which should make everybody a worthy unit in a greater whole. A true Indian is he who can think in terms of the whole nation, irrespective of any differences whatever, yet maintain his own individuality, culture and tradition.

The advancement of the women of India was

Mrs. Naidu's first public activity, and then from 1905 she took a marked interest in the fate of India. At first she tried to introduce reforms for the welfare of her country through the Government, but the Amritsar massacre of 1919 completely antagonised her, and on this account she joined the Indian National Congress. So great an asset did she prove herself that eventually she was elected their first Indian woman President, in 1925. It was this Congress which, under her presidentship, flung an ultimatum to the Government with threats of civil disobedience, obstruction and refusal of office. From the beginning she found herself in the front of the political arena, working for the freedom of India.

During the Congress split of 1925-6 it was her unfaltering energy which, with the help of Pandit Motilal Nehru, was responsible for the return of the five Bengal leaders to the fold and the cementing of differences. Though now there are many women directly connected with the Congress organisation, it is her example that has been largely responsible for their enrolment. She has seen the evolution of the Congress in every one of its stages, from that of a handful of the upper-class intelligentsia to a not very formidable body, till the momentous Congress of 1919 in Amritsar, when it completely changed its policy to one of extremist ideals; and to-day when it stands as a consolidated body to represent the demands of the Indian people as a whole. Through interminable days of struggle Sarojini Naidu has never faltered; she has proved herself worthy in

every way of the hand of comradeship that was stretched out to her.

Inspired by the example of Gandhiji, she has ungrudgingly spent the best years of her life in the service of her country. In 1924 she toured throughout the colonies of East and South Africa on a political mission on behalf of the Indian settlers there. They, whose cause Mahatma Gandhi had made his own, welcomed this messenger from their homeland. Very little improvement she found in their lives; they still lived under the iron heel of their masters. Sarojini Naidu, too, made their interests her own; she tried to carry forward the work started by Gandhiji. She became vitally interested in their welfare, and as a mark of recognition she was later appointed a member of the Government of India deputation to South Africa.

It is an unique position that Mrs. Naidu has created for herself in this country, and by virtue of it she has represented India several times at various international gatherings. As one of the three women delegates to be sent from India she attended the Round Table Conference in 1931, not as a representative of the Congress but of Indian womanhood. Sarojini Naidu has come to represent the regeneration of India's women from the trammels of prejudice and false pride into the arena of political struggle. She remains a shining example of the achievements possible for women. She is the pole-star of women's freedom.

Independent action has been her characteristic



quality from an early age, and it manifested itself strongly when she a Brahmin married Major Naidu, who is a Sudra, thus breaking through all traditional laws. This step was most daring, for it was not regarded favourably even amongst Westernised Indians and laid her open to much criticism. That it detracted in no way from the influence she wielded is a tribute to her own personality.

Mrs. Naidu, apart from her forceful character, is gifted with high social qualities. Though she is not a beautiful woman, there is a brilliancy about her and a charm of manner entirely her own. She brings it to bear upon all, and friends and strangers alike feel a hospitable warmth in her mannerisms. She has a flair for making friends, and in the largeness of her heart she extends her hospitality to young and old alike. Her ever-growing popularity with the younger generation is a compliment in itself. Never for a moment does she allow anybody to be overpowered by the tremendous personality that is hers; she unbends most charmingly to everybody. Under her expansive influence people find themselves growing and are irresistibly drawn to her by her enchanting manners. Sarojini Naidu enjoys a beauty that puts physical loveliness in the shade. It is the beauty of the heart, soul and intellect. It clothes her with a personality that is so attractive as to make her an outstanding figure. But she is proud, maybe rightly so; nevertheless, her pride is the one quality about her that is the least endearing. This provides her with a feeling of superiority and an authoritative

manner which strike a harsh note in her otherwise impressive character. It endows her with an autocratic manner, which, though she carries it regally, inspires awe in more sensitive hearts. Having for so many years rubbed shoulders with an unsympathetic world, she appears to have developed a certain impatience with her intellectual inferiors. But in a position of authority she is a great driving power; her own forceful personality carries others in her wake towards a life of action and achievement.

Her power of oratory has been one of the greatest assets to the Congress in its work of awakening dormant forces. It should be a matter of great pride to her that it was her speeches that inspired Jawaharlal Nehru to proceed further on the road which was to make of him the great man that he is to-day. She has a wonderful influence over the students, more so because for years she has held their brief. A scheme for assisting Indian students has been one of the many interests she had in their welfare. With this in view, she has lectured in all the principal cities of India. Even to this day, when her speeches have become both famous and frequent, she has been known to hold an audience of young students speechless and enthralled. She has been called upon to deliver as many as three lectures on the same subject in the same day, and as one who has been present at all three, I can say that there has been no sameness about them. On one occasion, hearing a certain admirer acclaiming her lecture, she turned to her with a whimsical smile and said: "Is this the

first time you've heard me? I thought so: you won't think it so wonderful after the twentieth!" But that is not true. Whenever Mrs. Naidu speaks there is some quality in her utterances that finds an echo in the enthusiasm and energy of the most moribund of individuals. Generation after generation of students, young men and young women, have listened to her speeches, and still crowd the halls to hear her speak. Through all these years she has helped them by her sympathy and her exhortation to find the correct sphere for their enthusiasm, and she has in her turn enjoyed their unbounded confidence and admiration.

While visiting London in 1928 she addressed several meetings there, speaking of India's ideals and aspirations. Sarojini Naidu pleaded before the British public for the independence of India, which would help in no small measure to the establishment of world peace. So long as India lay bound hand and foot there was no hope for the rest of the world; the time was over when everybody could shut their eyes to the fate of India. Her politicians had opened up such channels of world interest that India's freedom was irretrievably linked up with the means of universal peace. Speaking of feminist movements, she condemned them as being a confession of woman's inferiority.

From England she proceeded to America, and she has herself characterised her mission there in an unusual manner. It was while speaking of Professor Syed Hossein's work for India in America that she

said: "Syed Hossein found that the more tales he made up the better they were believed. And since truth is stranger than fiction, and hence more credible, he spoke to the Americans of India's culture, her ancient civilisation, and showed that her people were actually not barbarians. He also disproved such tales, for instance, as that all the Indian girl children were thrown to the crocodiles. He asked them, if that were true, how could they reconcile the reports of India's growing population? Thereafter I went to America to give credence to his stories, to support his statements." Referring to the same trip on another occasion, she said: "The moment my boat arrived I was set upon by the live-wire American reporters, who all screamed at me: 'What do you think of Katherine Mayo?' I replied: 'Katherine Mayo? Who *is* she?' I think that was her fittest epitaph!" Though it is true that part of her mission in America was to lecture against Miss Mayo's libellous book on India, she maintained a reserve and dignity throughout, and refused to be hustled in the true American style. She stated publicly the *Swarajist* point of view and gave every publicity to the case for India. Many of her revelations were eye-openers to the American public, whose thoughts had never been able to range into such wide spheres. Never for a moment did she swerve from this path, undaunted she presented to the world the true spirit of the new India, wide awake to her disabilities and her needs. She created such sympathy that it formed the most effective

counter-propaganda to all such literature as the book by Miss Mayo.

Sarojini Naidu has been in every way an ardent follower of Gandhi; in the beginning of her political career he sponsored her efforts and she became his protégée. During the Salt Tax Campaign, when, with his usual singleness of purpose, he marched his followers to the sea, she became his invaluable helper. The old man, with his firm step, staff in hand and a calm look in his eyes, was ever her inspiration as he was to millions of others. When he and his deputy, Abbas Tyabji, were both arrested for breaking the Salt Laws, Mrs. Naidu was chosen in their place to carry on the campaign. Proudly she pursued her way with a troop of volunteers towards the Dharasana salt depôt, but they were surrounded by the police. Following Gandhiji's command of non-violence, they could not break through, and Dharasana was not reached. Though she was not imprisoned then, she has been in gaol several times. In the beginning of the civil disobedience movement she was spared, because the Government followed the policy of not arresting women until they were found to be as determined and as "dangerous" as the men. Everybody, irrespective of sex, was then put in prison. Being the President of the Congress in 1925, when it was decreed an illegal body, Sarojini Naidu had to go to gaol for trying to arrange for its meeting directly against Government orders.

Even before she came under Gandhi's influence, her own marriage had shown her indifference to

caste prejudices. Thus it was no wonder that she should be of great help in his work for the "untouchables" and for the abolition of caste restrictions. Gandhi's dreams within this short span have been realised in a manner which even he had not visualised, though as late as 1931 the *Statesman* commented sarcastically upon it. It was in connection with a reference made to the depressed classes by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu at the Round Table Conference: "The Hindu community should be pledged to remove the blot of untouchability. The depressed classes should have an equal place in all things." Upon this the *Statesman* commented: "More than Mrs. Naidu's and Mr. Gandhi's poetic dreams will be required before Dr. Ambedkar (leader of the untouchables) and his friends feel comfortable about their future prospects under *Swaraj*." Another example of the divide and rule policy of the Government, which this paper has only dared to voice! But its comments and sarcasm were a little too previous, for within five years of it revolutionary changes had taken place. Due to the indefatigable energy of Gandhi and his lieutenants, of whom Mrs. Naidu is one of the most prominent, institutions and temples have been thrown open to all alike, irrespective of differences of any sort. Century-old barriers have fallen away at the call of nationalism.

Little had Sarojini's parents thought that one day their daughter was to be considered a mouthpiece of the Indian nation, and of Indian womanhood in particular. She is an outstanding example before the

world of what the women of this country can do, even though her own exceptional powers have helped her to attain a great destiny. Though nearly sixty years of age, her enthusiasm and capacity for work are not even slightly diminished from the day when she first interested herself in the cause of her country. To-day, with her experience gained by hardship and labour, she is an invaluable asset to the Congress. It is difficult to visualise any nationalist movement without Sarojini Naidu in the foreground. Another excellent trait which redounds to her credit is how far from her political and public life she has thrust the trials of her private life. She has never allowed them to intrude upon the work she set herself to do. Her family life has not been without its sorrows, her children have not all been as successful as she had thought they would be. The failing health of her elder daughter, Padmaja, has been a tremendous source of anxiety to her. But never for a moment has she permitted her own public life to be interfered with in any way. Her troubles have been her own; she has not shifted them on to any other shoulders; while a large share of the nation's responsibilities has also been hers. Whatever sympathy she craved she found in her work and her colleagues, as well as the love and admiration of her children. The appreciation of the people has been her greatest reward and the highest tribute to her capabilities. She is the greatest woman of the present age, the product of a new India, clamouring for the recognition of her rights before the world,

## Chapter 7

### ABDUL GHAFFAR KHAN

NICKNAMED the "Frontier Gandhi," this disciple of the Mahatma stands over six feet in his bare feet, and, in spite of his Pathan birth, has an appearance of extreme docility. They present a queer picture of contrast and comparisons, these two Gandhis—one from Gujerat, the other from the North-West Frontier Province. Born under entirely different skies, educated on widely divergent lines, of different faiths, it is only a common cause that has brought them together.

In spite of the assertions in the *Statesman*: "To regard him as a loyal servant of Congress and Mr. Gandhi calls for more faith than most men have, and his doctrine 'exterminate the British who keep us in slavery' is often hidden from sight by another, 'exterminate the infidel who stands in the way of a Moslem World,'" Abdul Ghaffar Khan is one of the greatest exponents of the Congress creed. An effort to introduce, through the Press, a communal touch to the activities of the Frontier leader is revealed in the tone of this editorial note. The alliance between the two Gandhis has held most dangerous prospects for the future of British rule in India. Britain was not wanting in perspicacity when she tried to prevent this by adding a tinge of communal intrigue. It was freely hinted that Abdul



Ghaffar Khan was trying to make a scapegoat of the Congress for the furtherance of his own ends. But when two men of high moral integrity are concerned these tactics are bound to fail. The Frontier is to-day pledged to Gandhi's creed of independence and non-violence entirely through the efforts of this one man.

Singularly gentle in appearance, shy of manner, he seems hardly the man who has systematically organised the powerful "Red Shirts." Clad in a *handspun dhoti*, his attitude is one of absolute confidence in the beliefs of the Congress. This man, who has been accused of insidiously plotting communalism, has discarded even the outward signs that may differentiate him from the ordinary Congress worker. But his magnetic personality finds expression in his fiery exhortation to his countrymen to rise in the cause of freedom. He may be called a "miracle man," for he has been instrumental in pledging the turbulent Pathans to the unfamiliar ways of non-violence. His claim to leadership is unquestionable, for he has been able to bend their ways to those of a bloodless and non-violent revolution. But he has not been slow in bringing his followers and his own leadership to the feet of the one man whose everyday life has made him greater than a leader of men—a prophet of a new era. Never for a moment has Abdul Ghaffar Khan thought in terms of self; had he lived in a different age his might have been religious martyrdom. He was entirely inspired by a love of service. Even before

thoughts of actual political freedom took definite shape, his heart craved to help in the uplift of his people. Their backwardness, their poverty and social decay touched him in the raw at the very outset, and he resolved to be of practical help in their regeneration. But when, with his native doggedness, he began a diagnosis of their ailments, he realised that it was years of foreign domination which had slowly but surely crushed their self-determination as a people. There and then he realised that social reformation was only possible after political regeneration had been achieved.

From the beginning of British rule in India it is the Pathans who have never quite been reconciled to settling down to it. Incidents of daily life on the Frontier have given ample proof of the dissatisfaction amongst the tribesmen. A running feud between them and the British has given rise to continuous border fighting and shooting affrays. Amongst such people was born Abdul Ghaffar Khan, though his education followed the usual dull routine of a mission school in Peshawar. Evidently, even then he was ill suited to the life of a Government clerk that was being planned for him, for he failed to pass the Matriculation Examination. Without this qualification it was impossible for him to find a suitable position, but it was also most unlikely that his strong and outstanding personality would stagnate in his village without employment. His youthful exuberance and enthusiasm brought him under the influence of the Haji of Turangzai, who, in spite of

his anti-British tendencies, was at that time only engaged in establishing his religious schools all over the Frontier Province. Of such a school, in his own village of Utmanzai, Abdul Ghaffar Khan became the secretary. The Haji found in him a promising disciple, whose ability and industry placed him well above his fellow workers.

It was not till 1919, however, that Abdul Ghaffar Khan publicly voiced his anti-British feelings. When after the Amritsar incident martial law was proclaimed he with his colleagues fled into the Mohmand country, where the Haji of Turangzai had found shelter. On his return he was interned; his estrangement from the Government was complete, and he made no secret of his hostility. For ten years thereafter the British Government sought his co-operation to fight the growing spirit of nationalism, but he openly rejected all offers. The authorities saw in him a powerful ally if only he could be enlisted in the cause of bureaucracy, and a grave menace should he be allowed to go on in his own way. They sought to conciliate him by peaceful means, tried to win him over by alluring promises, but Abdul Ghaffar Khan's purpose was unshaken. He was not going to sell his heritage for a mess of pottage, and he became a veritable thorn in the flesh of the British Government. They were unable to stem the tide of his influence, which resulted in the formation of the Red Shirt Army.

It began as a youth movement under the name of Naujawan Sabha. The name "Red Shirts" was

adopted because of their shirts, for which they found red a convenient colour. It is not true, as has been alleged, that the name was the outcome of their communistic tendencies, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan freely spoke of the "extermination of the British in India." It is futile to treat this movement as incidental to Frontier life, for it has spread far into the interior; from Peshawar City to the Peshawar suburbs, into Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Hazara. It has the power to spread the flames of revolt and to set the whole Frontier Province alight, so that the ordinary warfare of the tribesmen will appear as a mere firework display. Under the astute leadership of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the "Red Shirts" became formidable in the political field even before linking up with the Indian National Congress. He himself had for years been a member of Congress, but it was only in 1931 that he placed his volunteers at its service. Rightly he fathomed that the Round Table Conference would bring India no nearer to her aspirations and, as such, civil disobedience was inevitable. He therefore placed himself with his army of Red Shirts at the disposal of the Congress, pledged to its theory of non-violence.

Many people have called the Frontier Gandhi an "unlettered political upstart." It is true that his appearance in the national cause has been meteoric, but his sympathy and co-operation have shown a quality of iron determination. Hardy son of the mountains, nurtured under difficult climatic conditions, he has a wonderful insight into the psycho-

logy of his countrymen. He has from the beginning known how to use his own dominating personality to the best advantage, and how to strike at the very roots of their being. It was only he who could have turned this excitable people to thoughts of nationalism. He took advantage of the moment made auspicious for him by years of restraint under which the Frontiersmen had been chafing. Their very excitability, resentment and grievances he turned into the channel which promised them freedom from slavery. These people had never been able to brook authority and domination, their proud spirit could not tolerate bending the knee to foreigners, and always they had fretted and fumed against their enforced dependence. Under the magnetic influence of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, they realised that it must be a matter for action, but judicious action with a well-defined policy. Sniping and shooting would lead them nowhere; they must unite with the rest of India. To them he explained the method of Gandhi's non-violent policy, and he soothed them by patiently explaining his mission to help in the liberation of India. It was only his powerful personality that made them accustomed to the idea of victory without striking a blow. The whole idea was novel and unbelievable, but he supported his statements with concrete facts and won them over to his way of reasoning. His honesty of purpose, his sincerity and his power to stir them out of the depths was his greatest claim to leadership. Within him was an inborn sense of organisation, for in 1931 he

presented before the Congress his band of one hundred thousand volunteers (Red Shirts) to carry out its programme. Since then his whole movement has been based on the Congress plan of action under the Congress flag.

Free speaking is characteristic of the man, and he has never made any secret of the purpose of his agitation. When he refused to fall a prey to the machinations of communalists he was accused by them of betraying his religion. But in clear tones he announced his ideals:

"People complain against me for having joined the Congress. The Congress is a national not a Hindu body. It is a *jirga* (organisation) composed of Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, Parsees and Muslims. The Congress as a body is working against the British. The British nation is the enemy of the Congress and of the Pathans. I have therefore joined it and made common cause with the Congress to get rid of the British. They should not be deceived by the tactics of the *ferenghi* (foreigners)."

In the last line he shows insight into the intricate origin of communal trouble.

It was freely alleged that Abdul Ghaffar Khan's co-operation had been bought by the Congress. Apparently, however, all that came of this "bribe" was a life of privation, discipline and prison, which should have changed the outlook of a lesser man. But he continued to be a faithful adherent of Gandhi.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan firmly believed that the British were responsible for the abdication of King

Amanullah, under whom Afghanistan was becoming united and progressive. He affirmed that the proximity of a strong and independent country would be detrimental to their interests in India, hence they had supported the rebel Bacha-i-Saqao to hinder the true progress of Afghanistan. From the start his enmity towards Britain was implacable, and he spoke freely of "throwing off the foreign yoke." All efforts of the Government to placate him and turn his activities into their constitutional ways proved of no avail. He and his Red Shirts duly celebrated Independence Day on January 26, 1930, in unison with the rest of India. The dual plan of arresting his followers and of trying to conciliate him was even then not abandoned. In December 1931, 377 Red Shirts were arrested, and the wearing of Red Shirt uniform was declared illegal; but Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, were both invited to attend the Chief Commissioner's *darbar*. They refused the invitation. Instead a reception was held on the same date to one of Dr. Khan Sahib's sons, who had been released from prison. In his honour the countryside from Peshawar to Utmanzai was lined on both sides by Red Shirts—one example of direct defiance and courageous behaviour on the part of the leaders, as well as the entire people, who exhibited a childlike reliance upon Abdul Ghaffar Khan. In spite of knowing that their defiance would meet with retribution in no small measure from a powerful Government, they deliberately courted all kinds of ill-treatment and privation, and were

quite fearless. It was only the singleness of their purpose, unity and discipline, coupled with a real faith in the integrity of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, that made them act thus.

For some time the British in India were in a dilemma about the Frontier Gandhi. How were they to tackle him? What was at the bottom of his movement? They tried to weld him into the forces of communalism, but somehow, with his absolute hatred of British domination, he could not fit into that scheme. For some time, in spite of this, a communal explanation of his activities was freely circulated. But the direct appositeness of his ways circumvented all such intrigue. His constant references to the Congress made the task of segregating him and his Red Shirts from the rest of nationalist India most difficult. As always, the Government tried to find his price. They tried not to antagonise him completely by seeking a policy of conciliation. In this they showed great patience always, with the hope of winning him to their side. There was no question that, if his sympathy could somehow be enlisted, he would prove a powerful ally. His hold over his own people was great, he understood them and their feverish discontent perfectly, while they were entirely swayed by his dynamic personality. If this force could be turned by promises to the ways of Imperialistic policy, it would make Britain's position on the Frontier a trifle more secure. On the other hand, if it took the other side, making a united front with the rest of India against Imperialism, it



would become a grave menace to Britain's Empire. Therefore, with infinite patience the powers-that-be tried a policy of conciliation before attempting coercion, while at the same time trying to undermine his power by arresting his followers and endeavouring to stamp out the Red Shirt movement. This process of trying to win over Abdul Ghaffar Khan made slow progress. Strange theories about him were ventilated. He was called an enigma, his real ambitions and ingenious methods were said to be shrouded in mystery, while conjectures of a communal colouring were hinted at. But the Frontier Gandhi has never been a puzzle, for he does not belong to a race who have a double-sided character. From the beginning he exhibited his native candour and freedom of thought. What he asserted at the very start he still maintains—that foreign rule in India is responsible for the lack of progress and the deterioration of the country. Neither coercion, nor conciliation, nor privation, has made him deviate from the path he had originally planned. His link with the Congress, his Gandhian way of thought, are still further proof of the honesty of his purpose. There never has been any mystery, for the Pathan, if anything, is vehemently outspoken; he can never understand subterfuge. The leader of such men would scorn to shroud himself in a haze of political imaginings; in their simplicity they believe in direct action, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan's has never been anything else.

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is hardly the word that can be applied to one whose services have been entirely voluntary, and who has materially lost much in preserving his aloofness from Imperialist contacts. His sincerity has been his greatest asset, and if he had any "ambitions," he voiced them clearly in his exhortation to the Pathans thus:

"Oh, Pathan brothers, what has happened to you? Your brethren and neighbours, the Wazirs, who live only ten miles away, have shed their blood in guarding their hills from foreign interference, yet you can do nothing for your very fertile country!"

And such lines as "There is no better *jihad* (mission) from the point of view of Islam than to free your country from slavery and foreign yoke," have been insidiously interpreted as a command to Muslims to start a Holy War against all infidels, including Hindus. If so, how are these words reconciled:

"If anyone opposes my party, then let him suggest another way which will point out to me how I can release not only Islam, but the whole world, from the clutches of the cruel-hearted English nation!"

On the other hand, they appear to be a pointer towards the universality of his mission and the catholicity and tolerance of his views. His work is for humanity at large, for freedom from the bondage which imprisons his countrymen and deadens their finer sensibilities. Unhesitatingly, from the very beginning he has marked Great Britain out as the

greatest enemy to India and considered her the biggest hindrance to the welfare of the Indian people.

With the object of organising a well-disciplined mass, he toured the entire North-West Frontier Province enrolling his *Khudai Khitmatgars*, or the Servants of God. This was the foundation of the Red Shirts. His creed and doctrine were so attractive to his restless and dissatisfied countrymen that his mission was enthusiastically received by all. The many thousands of Muslim and Pathans living in that area rallied round him, and his personal magnetism made of him a virtual dictator and a patriot as well. He was loved and respected, but never feared; for, in spite of his fiery eloquence, he was always a picture of gentle behaviour. The movement spread through the entire province, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan toured through India to make his propaganda known. He was not allowed into Bengal, the venue of terrorism. But the miraculous charm of Gandhi fell upon him, and without affiliating his entire organisation he himself became a member of the Congress. Thereafter, he set himself the Herculean task of converting the headstrong and warlike Pathans to the Gandhian creed. Once more it was his personal influence that won, and he was able to link up his Red Shirts with the Congress in 1929-30. Since then he has actively helped in making known the Congress propaganda among his people, who had hitherto no idea of what was being done by the rest of their countrymen. During the "no rent"

campaign of 1929 he and his Red Shirts organised a successful prevention of revenue realisation. Members of his own family refused to pay, and the Government had great difficulty in effecting their collections. What is more, the Red Shirts set up parallel jurisdiction side by side with the existing areas under Government. Landholders were required to pay a small fee per crop towards the Red Shirts' fund; offenders coming under criminal administration were often concealed from the police, but at the same time heavily fined or otherwise punished by the Red Shirts. The money collected was sent to the Congress.

For his allegiance to the Congress, Abdul Ghaffar Khan was shown no mercy and suffered the same persecution and imprisonment as all the other Congressmen. His spirit filled his followers, who, even in his absence, carried on their work. Into them he infused his enthusiasm for the national cause and lit such fires of patriotism as no hardship could extinguish. He was externed from his own home as a "malcontent" and took refuge with Mahatma Gandhi in Wardha. He lived with him and learnt the ways of village upliftment, rural reconstruction, and development of cottage industries. Unknowingly, the British Government provided him with an opportunity he had long sought, which his own work in the Frontier did not permit. As a brother Gandhiji welcomed Abdul Ghaffar Khan, saw no differences between them, for none existed by virtue of their same outlook. From each other's ways and inter-

change of ideas they learnt much. Everybody was enchanted with the Frontier Gandhi's simple and childlike ways; he lived in the hermitage as one of them, and docilely partook of whatever they had to offer, while his feelings towards Gandhi grew deeper and his admiration more intense. He lived under the shadow of this master-mind happily, yet his heart ever longed for the Frontier and his unfinished work there. And it was only due to the intervention of Gandhiji that he was finally allowed by the Government of India to return, on the Congress acceptance of ministry under the New Constitution.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan has lived to see the first material realisation of his ideals—the establishment of Congress supremacy in the Frontier Province. His brother and co-worker, Dr. Khan Sahib, is the Premier of the Ministry under the Congress régime. It was a doubly happy day for him when he was able to arrange a tour for Jawaharlal Nehru throughout the province in 1937. The then Congress President was pleasantly surprised at the attitude of the Pathans and "the quiet dignity" of the Frontier Muslims in contrast to the "hysteria" of the communalist Muslim League. In matters of religion, Nehru found them far from bigoted, but religious in a very broad sense. Their sincerity and childlike simplicity compelled his attention; intrigue was very far from their thoughts. He was further impressed at the absence of *pardah*, except in the cities, so much so that there was a regular corps of Pathan women among the Red Shirts. They always spoke in terms

of India as a whole, with themselves as a part of the nation; there are no individual interests at stake. Though they looked up to the Afghans, and there was a feeling of kinship because of the similarity in language and culture, politically they looked very definitely to India. There was no doubt that this bond of unity had been greatly strengthened by the "common sacrifices for a common cause."

"I am used to big crowds and popular enthusiasm," remarked Jawaharlal on his return from the Frontier, "but the discipline and quiet dignity of these people were striking. The words they uttered did not seem to be mere flourishes, meaning little. They seemed to mirror the desire of their hearts, and behind them they carried the impression of reserves of strength. The whole of India has reason to be proud of these Frontier people, and inevitably, when India is a free country, as it should be before many years are out, they will have an honoured place in it."

Of such a people was born Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and these are the people whom he moulded to the ideals of nationalism, and whose turbulent energy he harnessed to the ways of a non-violent revolution. The Frontier people have taught the rest of India a great deal, and, above all, that they who are an active fighting race have realised the efficacy of non-violence and have accepted its ethics.

The entire activities of the Frontier Gandhi and his followers have been characterised by a thoroughness and dogged determination. It is characteristic



of the man that though he is the driving power and inspiration of the Frontier people, when it came to the assumption of executive power he stood aside in favour of the man whom he considered more capable of handling it than himself.

## Chapter 8

### MALAVIYA

MUCH has been said about Malaviya's contribution to communal tension between Hindus and Muslims, but there can be no doubt that his activities have been manifold within the boundaries of his community.

His conduct throughout has been characterised by orthodoxy and conservatism, but sincere nevertheless in beliefs and principles. In a progressive age, when the focus of vision extends far into the distance, when there are talks of world citizenship, it is impossible for a nation with a narrow outlook and bigotry to thrive. It is futile to think of India as a country apart, for we are inevitably involved in a mass struggle which has enveloped the entire world. Malaviya became, therefore, a misfit in the trend of world affairs as it is to-day; with his constricted outlook he found it difficult to realise any future beyond his home atmosphere. The value of his services was buried under his own intolerance and exclusiveness, and hidebound by them to the extent of suffocation.

The foundation of the Hindu University in Benares, the holy city of the Hindus, is a concrete proof of his efforts. It was entirely due to him that this institution took shape, and he worked for it with commendable energy. His name will be remembered long as one who served in the educational

cause of his country, as one who realised the necessity of intellectual companionship between students. But it is tragically typical of the man that his innate sectarianism should come out even in this, his greatest work, even in the choice of a name and place for it. He undertook the cherishing of Hindu culture and art, he tried to instil a love for it into those who came under his influence; but once more the greatness of the ideal was lost in the narrowness of his outlook. The absence of tolerance for anything non-Hindu was the greatest drawback to this seat of learning; it taught in terms of sect and induced an aloofness that barred the way to progress. Having been responsible for its organisation, Malaviya endeavoured to run it entirely on his own. He developed a dictatorial policy, and at the same time could not concentrate fully upon it, being led away by innumerable political and communal activities. The result of this one-man rule was most detrimental to the tone of the institution, and he was unable to co-operate with any of the great scholars of the day. It was one long tragic story of repelling them, for it is difficult for men of scholastic and intellectual temperament to brook interference or domination. Their self-respect rebelled against working in such an atmosphere of servility. Thus Malaviya failed to secure their valuable services for his university. Colleagues and co-workers alike dropped away one by one, sadly disillusioned by his domineering behaviour. On the other hand, the executive side of the university also suffered, for, as its vice-counsellor,

Malaviya gave too much of his time to other affairs in the outside world. Thus a great undertaking, when it materialised, failed to fulfil its objective.

Over fifty years ago Madan Mohan Malaviya first appeared on the Congress platform in Calcutta. Though he has maintained his connection with the Congress in spite of the radical changes it has undergone, he is a relic of the Moderate rule of 1908 to 1916. Even when the other Moderate leaders dropped out of sight, on the inauguration of the Montagu Reforms, he remained loyal, and subsequently found himself in the presidential chair for the fourth time. From the beginning he had never joined with the Extremists of even those days, whose policy in comparison with the Left of to-day looks like a mere mild protest. He had remained with the Moderates and taken no part in Extremist activities. During the Morley-Minto régime he was characterised by condemnation of the "Extremist excesses" and by loud protestations of his loyalty towards the Government. Thus when Gandhi produced his movement for non-co-operation it is not to be wondered that Malaviya was the first to dissociate himself from it. Its whole conception was antagonistic to his ideas, for he never wished for the severance of the British connection, but desired to attain certain liberties under British rule. It was not that he had not the interests of his country at heart, for he was absolutely sincere in his endeavours for her welfare. But he was not gifted with a long vision, and he could not imagine an India independent of British

influence and domination. This want of foresight has been his greatest handicap in the political world, and it is entirely the sincerity of his beliefs that has kept him in the prominent position he still occupies.

In spite of his disagreements with its policy, it is to his credit that he clung to the Congress as the one organisation voicing the demands of the Indian people. He never fell in with Gandhi's views; neither was he later converted to them, as were C. R. Das and Lajpat Rai. Even the Amritsar massacre failed to move him to countenance more extreme measures. He sought to be an intermediary between the Government and the Congress and tried to bring the latter round to more "reasonable" ways of thought. As usual, he failed to realise that the time for reconciliation was past, that it had now developed into a battle, upon whose triumphant issue depended the future of the Indian people. Though he deplored Gandhi's ways of working, he continued to develop personal contacts both with him and with Pandit Motilal Nehru. It reflects to his credit that, while he still clung to his Moderate policy, he always gave due honour to both these men for the morale of their principles. At the height of the non-co-operation movement he tried to effect a compromise between the British Government and Gandhi through Lord Reading. But this was impossible and futile, for feelings were running very high, and neither would the British Government deviate from its dyarchic policy, nor would Gandhi yield in his demands for the Indian people. It shows how great was Malaviya's

belief and reliance in the existing form of rule that, again in the Christmas of 1921, he tried once more to break down the existing enmity between the people and their rulers. Once more he failed in his proposals of peace, but his persistence knew no rebuff; he pursued his own dogged ways of thought. With his peculiar ideas, he did much against the non-co-operation movement by remaining outside it. His influence had much to do with the split in the *Swarajist* camp at that time.

Madan Mohan Malaviya's political career has been tragic, mainly because of his static outlook. He has not had the power to progress, and the very sincerity of his own ideas is his greatest handicap to adapting himself to change. Events move faster than his mental vision can reach, and he fails to visualise any future action with relation to present-day facts. He has wrapped himself up in his fixed ideology, and he cannot make it work in new surroundings. But that does not show him the futility of it, or that it should be adjusted accordingly. He does not allow his mind to stray beyond his own conception.

His is a strange complex, which is several centuries too late for this country, for it cannot accustom itself to any thoughts but those revolving in the self-same rut. The greatness of his soul has been tied to the meagreness of his outlook, and he cannot rise far or achieve all that he longs to achieve. There is a peculiar sadness in reflecting upon such people, whose mental equipment is their greatest enemy. A

vacillating indecision is the ultimate outcome, and Malaviya has been torn between his belief in the Congress itself and his distrust of its policy. He found it extremely difficult to reconcile his loyalty to his own political convictions, of compromise and moderation, with his attachment to the Congress.

During the post-reform days his mind was in a far from happy state, for it was the beginning of an unfamiliar line of national activities. Malaviya's place in the Legislative Council had hitherto been unique as mediator between the Government and the people, but after the reforms he found himself in the background. He who had enjoyed the confidence and respect of several Viceroys found himself without a following, without any position in the new legislature. The day of the individual politician had gone; the power had been transferred into the hands of parties, of whom the *Swarajists* formed the strongest body. For three successive years he tried to get a following, and, with this idea, joined the Nationalists; but the personality of Motilal Nehru forced everybody else out of the picture. Instead of becoming the leader he became one of the party—an utterly unsuitable position from his point of view. When the Independent Party made its appearance, Malaviya saw in it the opportunity he craved; but here too he was circumvented by Mr. Jinnah, who became its spokesman. Suffering once more from disappointment, he resigned and launched a new combination of which he is the unquestioned leader. This has been for years the dividing factor in the

opposition benches, for it employed a sectarian method of working, wholly unsuitable to mass representation. Thus through communalism Malaviya found the following he sought—a Hindu party fighting for the interests of the Hindus.

Out of his disappointments and failures was born the Hindu Maha-Sabha, and it made its appearance within the Congress, for Malaviya had never broken off his connection with it. He had clung to it, and now within its folds he introduced this new body; under the cloak of nationalism it paraded its one-sided policy. Even though he never quite got all the power he wished—that is, enough to cast away the Gandhi cult—yet he and his party were powerful enough to antagonise the Muslim element. Dissension and friction followed in his wake, which boded ill for the unity of the Indian peoples.

Malaviya's championship of the rights of the Hindus has without a doubt given him an important position in the eyes of the orthodox community, but it has been most injurious and harmful to the cause of freedom in India. Being a man of outstanding ability, he has been able to sway public opinion by his championship, for unlike Mr. Jinnah his communalism had the cloak of nationalism to conceal its real motives. It has been responsible for promoting class feuds and communal tension, and has done nothing to ease the situation. His efforts have made the position of the British in India stronger, by virtue of producing dissension and discord and breaking down the foundations of a united front.



Ineffective leadership in other spheres has been made effective by stirring up the communal consciousness. It is largely built up on his effective oratory, which never fails to draw large audiences. He has a very fine presence, which must impress his hearers, and a beautiful voice, which, combined with a fluent delivery, are the real equipment for any orator. But he is long-winded, affecting a classical style of language; very often he is boring in the extreme. Though perhaps his English speeches might be criticised, his Hindi ones leave no doubts as to his powers of oratory. With a perfect command of vocabulary, though highly Sanskritised, his appeal to the educated Hindus is remarkable. There is a richness about his speeches which makes even the long-windedness excusable, for the aptness of his illustrations appeal to sentiment, and choice of words create an interest in the study of his subject. But he shows a marked negligence for accuracy, and this makes the analysis of his political speeches very difficult. Grasp of details and relevancy are found most wanting, which reflects badly on the political platform, where people want something more than mere words. His rhetorical ability suffers equally from want of precision and the lack of solid facts and figures, which are more convincing than the most brilliant of speeches. Nevertheless, even at this age his energy is boundless, and he is never tired of speaking. Thus he is able to carry his campaign far and wide into every part of India, and there are few who have not been interested to hear him. He

belongs to the old school of politicians, to whom oratory was an essential part of their duties, and who relied upon this more than anything to rally their followers. In this age of simplicity and terseness of speech he remains a unique figure of the orators of the past, for few of such people now exist. The politicians and leaders of to-day win their place by their daily life and work and by personal contact with the people themselves. There is no time for lengthy oratory; economic and political distress have left no room for mere words. Action and speed have forced this great art out of political life. Present-day speeches are matter of fact, to the point, and devoid of rhetorical flourishes; thus Malaviya's old-world accomplishment is not without its attractions.

Though coming of humble parentage, Malaviya graduated from the Muir Central College, Allahabad, and became a school teacher. Even as a student he was keenly alive to politics, and used to make impassioned speeches about work for the Motherland. He saw great visions of a democratic India, and even then used to wax eloquent over it. It was eventually his great desire to participate in the political life of the land that made him desert his own profession of teaching for that of a lawyer. The monetary side of the calling did not influence him in any way; it was rather the opportunities it afforded for political distinction. Unfortunately, he never rose to any heights in his profession, mostly due to his want of concentration on it, for he was constantly engaged in public activities. His failure, or rather

his failure to make a mark, at the Bar was also greatly due to his want of those qualities essential in a successful lawyer. Once more, as in his speeches so in his legal life, the want of precision, the failure to grasp details, and irrelevancy were his drawbacks. He could make no impression at the Bar, but certainly it afforded him a great many opportunities for his political work. Yet there too, though he identified himself with the Nationalists, his sympathies lay with the Liberals, who, however, would not stand his leadership. His innate conservatism held him back from the Extremists, yet his views often proved most embarrassing to his friends of the other camp. It was as if he were fighting a lone battle, while neither side knew whether they could definitely count on him. Thus he has never been very much use as a leader in a national crisis, for he has failed to command a following. His was a strange position in the politics of those days. Very often he supported the *swarajist* campaign in the Assembly, yet never could the *swarajist* count fully upon his whole-hearted support. Equally often he opposed what he called their "extreme policy," and stood for the British connection; at the same time he was extremely fond of finding fault with the Government, criticising it most destructively. The Liberals, on the other hand, had no desire to work with him, though they gave him the fullest measure of respect. There is no disputing his work in the Assembly and in the local councils, in spite of which he was a lonely figure. He strove to be of service,

but it was in his attitude of compromise and conciliation that his downfall lay.

The Hindu Maha-Sabha has never made for communal peace; it has always sought to maintain its attitude of not yielding a single point. It was Malaviya who, in the organisation of this body, emerged from his failures in other fields to leadership of the communally minded Hindus. The deadly part of it was that it worked within the Congress, and was for many years most powerful. Through the fanaticism of religion Malaviya established his supremacy, though not to the extent of curbing the Extremist policy. It was impossible for him to do that, for the country wanted it; it was tired of compromises, it called for direct action; the masses were awake and would not be held back. Not the entire Congress under Malaviya could have deterred them; the only man who could have done so was Gandhi, but he was their representative, their spokesman.

Nevertheless, the Hindu Maha-Sabha had a great influence, and this resulted in several Muslims breaking away in sorrow and disgust. These losses have been irreparable and a great blow to the prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity. But it was not strong enough, for the Congress was fast becoming a people's body; their representatives were being elected to the committees. The masses had now a voice in it, socialism was making itself felt, and the banker and creditor class, of which the Maha-Sabha was mostly composed, began to feel uncomfortable

and unsettled. Labour made its appearance, and the capitalists fled to their one stronghold—Conservatism. Gandhi's mission for the "untouchables" also touched them on the raw, and Malaviya and his party felt their power further endangered. They retreated still more within the shell of their orthodoxy, and proved a greater hindrance to the task of unification. Loudly they cried that the Hindu religion was in danger and breathed fresh life into communalism. But even while they did so Malaviya knew that his hold over the Congress was fast disappearing, for, in the event of a compromise being effected with the Muslim League, most of his adherents would agree with it. He himself and the other leaders of the Maha-Sabha held aloof and refused to give in, but as a majority the Congress was ready to acquiesce. His attitude provided for Mr. Jinnah the loophole he sought to call off the deal. Malaviya's culpability in widening the breach between Hindus and Muslims is grave to the extreme, and instead of being of service to his country, his labours have proved of great disservice. The charge of communalism lies heavy upon Madan Mohan Malaviya.

An example of his ostentatious exclusiveness was provided when he went to Europe in 1931. He occupied a cabin *de luxe*, and a separate kitchen was screened off for him on the first-class deck. He was accompanied by a Hindu cook and took several jars of Ganges water to drink so that he could avoid taking water kept in the reservoir of the boat. Of

course, in England he drank the ordinary tap water. Arrangements for fresh milk were made at every port, and he was seriously considering the idea of taking a cow with him.

Amongst fairly recent happenings, Malaviya's rejuvenation treatment has provided much food for conjecture. It is characteristic of the man that he scorned Western methods of treatment and adopted that of a *yogi* reputed to be one hundred and seventy-two years old. Also typical of his courage is the incentive to give a chance to a countryman and prove that the ancient science of India was also capable of producing specialised forms of medical treatment. To him redounds the honour of establishing a record of scientific achievement for India. The experiment took a period of forty-five days under the *Kayakalp*, or Hindu rejuvenation treatment. He was put into a sealed chamber shaped like a woman's womb excluding light and ventilation. Except his sons, nobody was allowed to visit him, and even that on special occasions; he was forbidden to talk much, and had to live only on milk. The medicine was freshly prepared every night thirty miles away from Allahabad, and it was an elaborate process. The main item was a *palas* tree burnt with 15 maunds (1,200 lb.) of cow-dung cakes, and the ashes were brought in each morning. Of course, these are the broad preparations, the intricacies being performed with due secrecy. As a result of this Malaviya's wrinkles have disappeared and he has regained the vitality of a man twenty years younger.

He does not use spectacles, even while reading under the pale light of an oil lamp. In spite of his seventy-seven years he is now able to walk upright, and he was examined by a board of doctors, who have pronounced the treatment successful. Some time after the resumption of normal diet greater changes are expected, especially with regard to his teeth, which will be almost new in strength. He was treated right through with the same care as is lavished on a new-born baby. Once more he has been responsible for bringing to the fore the scientific knowledge that is India's age-old inheritance while of comparatively recent development in the West. Unbelievable as it may appear, he has, at the risk perhaps of his own life, proved it to be true.

In Malaviya a truly great soul has been lost within the meshes of conservatism and orthodoxy. Could he have liberated himself from the bonds of his own prejudices he might have risen to great heights. But he was hampered and hindered by his want of foresight, by his failure to adapt himself, and by being unable to move with the times. He lived too much in the past; all his social reforms were based on the society that had existed long ago, and though they were benevolent they failed in their objective. A realisation of a vaster and more united India did not come to him; he was incapable of it. Yet his was a personality that held thousands, and will yet hold many; but he will never be able to reach the heights which his powers have merited. In the light of his renewed youth and vigour, one fears

lest it be a greater asset in the cause of communal strife; one hopes that it will be harnessed to the benefit of a common cause, irrespective of caste or creed. The achievement of rejuvenation will be great if it also ranges this forceful personality on the side of youth—youth that is free of all prejudices of caste and creed, youth that is working under a common bond of comradeship.



## Chapter 9

### RAJENDRA PRASAD

IN 1893, when Rajendra Prasad topped the list in the entrance examination of the Calcutta University, the *Hindustan Review* wrote: "The young Rajendra is a brilliant student, by all accounts. We wonder what the future has in store for him. We hope he will live to occupy a seat on the Bench of the High Court of his province, and receive the letter of appointment—as did Mr. Justice Chandravarkar at Lahore—when presiding over a session of the National Congress."

Though this very paper prophesied for him the presidential chair of the Indian National Congress, at that remote time it could hardly dream of the niche the brilliant young student was destined to fill. Neither did the presidency of the Congress in those days mean what it did when Rajendra Prasad eventually attained it, for he first became President in 1932, when the Congress had been declared an illegal body by the Government. As a matter of fact, he himself was in gaol, confined for participating in the Civil Disobedience movement, and the Congress sessions to be held at Puri were abortive. How far removed in ideal from the prophetic utterance of the *Hindustan Review*!

From the early days of his student life Rajendra Prasad showed a wonderful organising capacity.

Though counted one of the distinguished students of the Calcutta University, he was never a mere bookworm. He was keenly alive and responsive to his surroundings, imbibing the intellectual atmosphere of his college activities. In debates and discussions he was ever in the forefront. The Beharee Club was started by him in Calcutta in 1902, for these were the pre-Partition days when Behar and Bengal were one as "the Lower Provinces," and therefore a great many Beharee students migrated to Calcutta for higher education. This was the precursor of the Behar Students' Conference, which, however, did not materialise till 1906, when the first sessions were held in Patna. Thus the lead in student movements can be traced to Rajendra Prasad.

Later in life, when he was practising as a lawyer, it was his indefatigable energy that inspired the popular opposition to the Patna University Bill. This Bill, of a most reactionary character, was introduced into the Imperial Legislative Council by Sir Sankaran Nair in 1916. But the vigorous anti-propaganda of Rajendra Prasad and his colleagues had the effect of getting the Bill substantially modified. His work for the University of Patna made his claim to the Vice-Chancellorship secure. He did active work in the cause of cheaper education for the masses and agitated for the recognition of Hindi and other provincial dialects as the medium of education. But when he threw in his lot with Mahatma Gandhi he resigned his fellowship. His departure was a serious loss to the infant university,

and the absence of his driving power proved a great handicap in its progress, especially when he accepted the Vice-Chancellorship of the Behar Vidyapith—a university run on national lines with a national objective. Under his guidance this organisation flourished, until it was closed down and its building seized by the Government, as a repressive measure against Civil Disobedience.

His greatest triumph of organisation was for the relief of those rendered destitute by the Behar earthquake of 1934. He was released, after fifteen months of imprisonment, two days after the earthquake had taken place. From the very moment of his release he worked hourly and nightly trying to organise relief to the stricken people. It is a tribute to him that he obtained the co-operation of all those around him, and his own capacity for work enrolled still more helpers. But the responsibility of this gigantic task was his, the burden lay with him, and there was not a moment that he grudged spending over suffering humanity. Rajendra Prasad, unaided by any outside forces, but merely by the magic of his personality, was able to raise 28 lakhs of rupees (over £200,000) for the earthquake sufferers' relief. Even the great Viceroy of India, with all the vast resources at his disposal, his might and influence, was barely able to double this amount. It was Rajendra Prasad's indefatigable devotion that made the realisation of this vast sum possible—for while the Viceroy had, as a single instance, the resources of the Indian princes at his command, Rajendra

Prasad's contributors were those who really sympathised with him and felt for the distressed people for whom he was labouring. His *clientèle* were the middle class and the poor, and there was no compulsion or the lure of higher honour; whatever help he obtained was gladly and voluntarily given. From this can be gauged the vastness of his influence throughout India—this man who was debarred from Quetta as an extraneous influence when, after the earthquake there, both he and Gandhiji offered their help. The authorities lost nothing thereby, but the people lost much.

As early in the day as 1906 Rajendra Prasad became involved in the struggle for national freedom. Having come into direct contact with the spirit of revolt in Bengal in connection with the Partition, he too was dragged into the turmoil. He became greatly interested in political work, for both he and the other Beharee students were bound to feel the repercussions of the agitation amongst their Bengali friends. With all his heart and soul he threw himself into it, and though as a consequence his hitherto untarnished scholastic record suffered, out of these activities emerged the embryo of the man he is to-day. His own loss was the country's gain.

In the expansion of his Servants of India Society, Mr. Gokhale's eyes fell upon the young Rajendra Prasad. He was invited to join the Society, and was himself most anxious to do so, but his elder brother's influence prevailed over him. This brother had been to him more than a father, for it was he who had

undertaken his education and upbringing after their father's death. It is to this man that he owes much of his success in every sphere of life from his earliest youth. Hence it was no wonder that at this brother's request he should abandon the idea of joining Mr. Gokhale. This repression of self-gratification shows up a salient feature in the character of the man; the keynote of his outstanding personality. From that time—and he was a very young man then—he showed a spirit of cheerful selflessness which has been the inspiration of his many achievements. He had been brought up to live a life of rigid simplicity, and from this he has never deviated. His needs are very few; thus he thought nothing of abandoning a lucrative practice at the High Court to join the non-co-operation movement. As a man who is frail in health, burdened with chronic asthma, he displayed a great disregard for personal comfort and safety. Time and again he deliberately courted imprisonment by adhering to his principles. Even in a country which holds persons of such high order as Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore, Rajendra Prasad's personality has been no less in its moral grandeur. His position in the front rank of the workers is no sinecure; he has deservedly carried the honours and responsibilities of leadership.

Rajendra Prasad's first association with Gandhi was in connection with what is known to history as the Champaran Affair. The situation was grave when Gandhiji visited Behar in April 1917; it comprised serious complaints by the *ryots* (cultivators), including

the compulsory growing of indigo. The Behar Government looked upon Gandhi's enquiry into their grievances as an unprecedented interference. This was not to be tolerated, and he was arrested and prosecuted, though subsequently released. It was then that Rajendra Prasad offered him his voluntary services, and he remained his faithful lieutenant right through those days. Ever alive to the slightest measure of relief for the poor, Gandhiji's endeavour touched him to the core. Sheer gratitude towards this man to whom every Indian, be he what he may, was dear, who was even then the mainspring of the national life, wrung from Rajendra Prasad a respect and deference which he was never to lose. As in every case, it was Gandhi who was his inspiration towards the path of nationalism. An inherent desire to be of service, and the glowing example before him, was his greatest incitement to choose the hazardous way of a political life. Through the efforts of Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad a great wave of feeling was created amongst the people in connection with the Champaran Affair. Matters came to such a head that the Behar Government was compelled to take notice of the *ryots'* demands. An official committee was appointed, and Gandhi himself was placed on it. This resulted in the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1918, by which a large measure of relief was afforded to the tenants. His first experience of public work in conjunction with Gandhi left a lasting impression upon Rajendra Prasad and paved the way for future relationships.

But it was the Amritsar episode of 1919, when General Dyer perpetrated his "mighty deed" at Jallianwallah Bagh, that he was finally shaken out of the constitutional rut of work in which he had continued even after the Champaran Affair. Events were moving very fast in the country, and he found himself swept in their train. When the agitation against the Rowlatt Act of 1919 started, Rajendra Prasad vigorously organised a campaign against it in Behar and signed the pledge to break all "un-righteous" laws. He made a stirring speech in Patna declaring that he would join the non-co-operation movement of Mahatma Gandhi should the Congress be in favour of it. Before even the decision was made at the Nagpore Congress of December 1920 he had suspended his practice in anticipation.

At that time he was well established in the legal profession, having started work at the Calcutta High Court in 1911. Before the partition of Bengal he was known as a promising and rising junior in Calcutta, and when he migrated to Patna after the Partition he came into a large practice there. He was held in high esteem by judges and clients alike. Never was there a more sought after junior than Rajendra Prasad; he was loved by his seniors and trusted by his clients. Had he continued in this manner, maybe the prophecy of the *Hindustan Review* would have actually come true, and if the Congress had remained anchored to its old moorings. But the tide of events and circumstances had broken the links and it had drifted apart, carrying with it

spirits of Rajendra Prasad's type. Thus Congress, having attained a different status, was a signal for a change in his career too. His destiny was irrevocably bound up with the destiny of his country. He emerged as the one leader of the nationalist element in Behar. By virtue of his outstanding merit this leadership had been thrust upon him; he had not sought it. But when it did devolve upon him he carried the honour as befitted a man of his character—with true humility and courage. He became one of the greatest exponents of non-co-operation and civil disobedience and advocated passive resistance. His enlistment in the ranks of the Congress was a momentous event, for his extensive powers have left no doubt that he is well entitled to the unrivalled position he occupies in his own province, and that he has well earned his popularity with the rest of the people of India. His is a strict idea of discipline and obedience to the edicts of the Congress. It is not that he does not voice his doubts of the policy advocated or refrains from criticism, but always it has been with a purely constructive motive. He is held in high esteem by all those in command, and his position amongst them is one of the deepest respect. His steady services have wrung an ungrudging recognition of his merits.

Rajendra Prasad is a firm believer in non-co-operation as an effective measure in capturing power for the people of the country. Civil disobedience, coupled with passive resistance, produces much greater results in his theory. He has suffered to the



extreme, financially and physically, because of these beliefs. Gaol life has left a great mark upon him, for he was never of robust health. It was most difficult for him to withstand the privations inflicted upon him when stronger bodies broke down under the strain. But he never suffered from "cold feet" or a loss of enthusiasm when he came out of gaol, and he was always ready to throw himself into the fray anew. On one occasion, in 1929, he wrote: "Let our slogan, therefore, be: 'Back to non-co-operation,' for *that* alone will bring India to her destined goal."

He recognised with Gandhi that, so long as India remained a source of lucrative exploitation for Britain, Britain would cling tenaciously to her position. Thus the surest way of unseating her and compelling her to transfer power to the people of the land was to try to stop her revenues and harm her trade. Rajendra Prasad co-operated with Gandhi to the fullest extent in the no-rent campaign and the boycott of British goods. Since India was in a terrible state of dependency, being without her own armies, since she was utterly crippled financially, the only retort left to her was non-co-operation and civil disobedience. Vigorously this was pushed forward, and in Behar it was most effective under the leadership of Rajendra Prasad. So great is his belief in the effectiveness of this theory that, though at the last election he supported and helped Congress candidates, it was through a spirit of discipline. Within his own heart he is still convinced that the capture of power will never be through legislatures, and

that non-co-operation is the only means of forcing the hand of the British Government.

For many years now he has been a member of the Working Committee of the Congress—a select body representative of different schools of thought and carrying on the administrative work according to their creed. He was for some time the General Secretary of the Congress, and for the second time became its President in 1935.

It was then that he had his momentous conversation with Jinnah, which in the last two years has given rise to controversial issues. At that time Jinnah, as the President of the Muslim League, was endeavouring to bring it within the fold of the Congress. What other schemes he may have had in mind, or what power he thought to win thereby, is merely speculative. Nevertheless, he approached Rajendra Prasad at Delhi about certain terms of concession and the recognition of the rights of the Muslims. Rajendra Prasad, whose mind had never worked on communal lines, was anxious to end this interminable feud between the Hindus and Muslims. With this in view he sought to propitiate Jinnah, as the Muslim spokesman, and tried to arrange terms with him. In his own simplicity he could not gauge the complexities at work within Jinnah, nor his craving for power. Therefore, taking the latter's sincerity for granted, he formulated an agreement in consultation with him. It appeared satisfactory to both, but Jinnah was sceptical as to whether the Congress would accept it. Rajendra Prasad assured

him that it would be passed by a majority, and as for the minority in opposition, they could be fought as in the recent election. To this Jinnah agreed, and except Malaviya and his lieutenants of the Hindu Maha-Sabha, the other Congress leaders were in agreement with the project. But by this time Jinnah no longer wanted to compromise; perhaps his whole scheme had been based on rejection by the Congress, for that would establish his own claims to nationalism and mark the Congress down as a sectarian body, enhancing his chances of mass leadership. Thus in Malaviya's refusal he discovered an excuse for withdrawing, and the negotiations fell through.

But it did not end there. For some unaccountable reason Jinnah produced it in 1937 as an incentive for his communal propaganda. He asserted that the Congress under Rajendra Prasad had broken faith with him. His motive was not wholly obscure, for the Congress drive for "Muslim support through mass contact" was becoming doubly dangerous to his position, and the increase in the Muslim memberships of the Congress was assuming alarming proportions. It was to try and turn the tide that he produced this long past "grievance" and became involved in unnecessary arguments. Rajendra Prasad preserved a calm front and repeated exactly what he had said before, and in this he received the absolute co-operation of Nehru, who was then President. He pointed out that the door for negotiations had never been slammed, it still stood open, and, if any suitable arrangement could be made, he was most willing to

accede. Jinnah flung back what he called "Mr. Rajendra Prasad's sporting offer," and refused to do anything but discuss how badly he and the Muslims had been treated by the Congress. He put the entire responsibility of the alienment between Hindus and Muslims upon Rajendra Prasad's failure to keep his word. The "sporting offer" consisted of a challenge to Mr. Jinnah's sincerity in wishing to end communal strife: "Although I may not speak with the authority of the President on behalf of the Congress to-day, may I make a sporting offer to Mr. Jinnah? I offer to get the formula accepted by the Congress even to-day, if he offers, as he did then, to get the signatures to it of all Muslim leaders, barring one or two, whom he named to me. Will he accept it?"

The offer is typical of the man, brief and to the point. Even through all these controversial documents not one word can be traced that is incompatible with the natural courtesy of his nature. There is not even any impatience in his answers—they are slow, deliberate and free from malice.

As a man, Rajendra Prasad is of a cool temperament, and keeps calm and collected in the face of trouble and opposition. Though he is vigorous in his attacks and a worker in every sense of the word, his enthusiasm has a more lasting quality. He is not carried away by his personal feelings, every one of his actions is deliberate and well thought out. He never rushes into anything, neither is he ever rushed into anything, but once he finds himself there he constitutes himself a bulwark of the organisation.

There is an unobtrusive and quiet efficiency about his actions which is characteristic of Rajendra Prasad. Spectacular action does not belong to him; he is of that group of steady and sure workers who are the heart and soul of any movement. He has been gifted with an unorthodox ideal, and thus is singularly free from narrowness and bigotry. Though born in fairly comfortable circumstances, his life has been characterised by a plainness which manifests itself in his food, clothes, and personal requirements. This has helped him to adapt himself to his changed circumstances, from that of a rich man in society to that of a Congress worker living on a minimum. It is not that he has ever given this more than a passing thought; his convictions have guided him towards this path, and he has felt in duty bound to live as his colleagues do. There could be no differences between him and them, for most of them were recruited from the poorer people. Never for a moment has Rajendra Prasad felt that he is sacrificing anything. On the other hand, his great desire to be of real service has been his sustenance. He has a winning charm, which has earned for him the co-operation of all classes of people. His shy smile at all times, his unflurried manner, even when faced with the gravest of situations, has made him revered by all. Modesty is one of his most endearing qualities, for this makes him despise nobody's help. He asks for other people to come forward and work. He never exaggerates his own powers, for he knows that alone man cannot move a step. It is only with

others to help that one can proceed at all, and in each of his undertakings Rajendra Prasad has realised this. As a result of this his work for the relief of sufferers in the Behar earthquake was acclaimed alike in official and non-official circles.

Early in life Rajendra Prasad had a great desire to travel to broaden his vision, to seek knowledge of a different colouring. Even then he realised the necessity of developing an international outlook, which for a man of his age was far ahead of the times. Though the craving for a foreign "finish" was far greater in those days, Rajendra Prasad did not actually want this "finish," but wanted to gain experience by not being restricted to affairs at home. Events, however, moved entirely differently to his desires, and his wish to go abroad was not gratified; he was swept into the prosaic tide of daily existence. He became a schoolmaster in Muzaffarpur, but only for a year, after which he migrated to Calcutta with a view to taking up the study of the Law. But much later, in 1928, he had occasion to visit England in connection with the Burma litigation case in the Privy Council. At that time he took the opportunity of visiting other Continental countries, where he was greatly honoured in view of his political position. He also met M. Romain Rolland. In Austria he was asked to participate in a pacifist meeting, and while giving a propaganda speech at Graz he was assaulted by some anti-pacifists. It was a brutal attack, and several weeks elapsed before he recovered and was able to resume his normal life.

A leading figure though he is in the political struggle that has captured the whole of India to-day, he is entirely free from party politics. There is a moral generosity about the man that lifts him above these things, and he is capable of appreciating the intrinsic qualities of his enemy. Because he belongs to the nationalist party, it does not bind him to the other person's point of view. He has always called for direct action, but that has not made him truculent or intolerant. While steadily carrying out the programme of work he has been deputed to enlarge upon, he bears no grudge towards those who stand in his way. The courage of his own convictions endows him with a respect for those of others; he has to do *his* duty sincerely, he cannot blame those who would do theirs according to their own ethics. His mental horizon has not become overshadowed by the gloom of party spirits, neither has he lost his clarity of vision in over-emphasising his own particular creed. His sympathy embraces one and all, while his judgment remains sound and true. Though at times people have considered him to be unduly influenced by his party, that is due to his strict ideas of duty and discipline. Within the organisation he might ventilate his disagreement, but once a certain policy has been carried, the honour of the Congress must be upheld at all costs. There has never been suppression of his personality, neither has he ever compromised; he may not agree with some particular manner of working, but if the majority does, he does not consider himself infallible. This is not weakness,

it is a great example of mind control, so as to be able to stand aside, if occasion rises, without a trace of ill-feeling. An outstanding instance of this occurred in the case of the outlawing of the Behar Kisan Sabha (peasant organisation). It was Rajendra Prasad who had helped it into existence; he had sponsored its cause. But when it came to disciplinary action, and the majority in the Behar Provincial Congress Committee were for acting on constitutional lines, Rajendra Prasad stood aside and allowed it to go through. Bitter disappointment and resentment raged all round that even Rajendra Prasad had let the *Kisans* (peasants) down. He uttered no protest, volunteered no explanation, for he *was* guilty by virtue of having been unable to stave off this issue. Such an action is in keeping with the character of this man; but this is not weakness—it is only the really strong in mind who can do it. Ever since the Congress accepted ministry, Rajendra Prasad, with Sardar Patel and Abul Kalam Azad, have been placed by the Congress High Command in charge of the administration. They are directly responsible to the Working Committee, while the ministers are dependent on them for the determination of their policies. It is the duty of these three to guide them, according to the policy laid down by the Working Committee.

In what lies the power and influence of this man? It consists mainly in his simple personality, and because the people can understand him. There are many who understand the people, but the people are often unable to fathom the complexities of such



minds and confidence is slow to develop. But in Rajendra Prasad they find a mind clear and transparent in its simplicity and they have not to grope amongst a maze of convergent ideas to arrive at the salient points. They know that it is their interests he has at heart, actuated by a deep sympathy for them. Of course, he is not infallible; his judgments may be right or wrong, but it is certain that his motives are absolutely honest and free from personalities. His other accomplishments of a dignified eloquence, an administrative ability, and a power to maintain discipline are amongst the reasons for his popularity, but it is his sense of duty towards the people and the purity of his motives that have been the root cause of its permanence.

He has a quiet charm and a sweet demeanour unwarped by the rigidity of his own political ideals. To all his countrymen, whether they be rich or poor, Government officials or Congressmen, he tries to do justice. He has the unusual capacity of being able to gauge the other person's point of view. An unique illustration of this is to be seen in the recent proposed cut in the salaries of Indian Government officials. Rajendra Prasad knew full well that circumstances had forced them into these places, they had become accustomed to a certain style of living, and, in view of their social position, they would be expected to maintain that standard; they would have to do it for the sake of their prestige, hence less salary would only further degrade them in the eyes of the public. They were after all also his countrymen. Thus he asked the ministers why they proposed to victimise

these people because they could lay hands on their fixed income, when they had no power to control the enormous practices of the doctors and lawyers. Could this restriction be made universal, it was the correct ideal, but otherwise it would be one-sided and pointless. His sentiments are in direct contrast with those of C. Rajagopalachariar, the Premier of Madras, and counted one of those foremost in the political struggle, who said that the English officers were like "hot-house plants" upon whom great care must be lavished, but the Indians were hardy, indigenous products who would flourish by virtue of their acclimatisation. In view of this, the latter could stand a reduction in salary, but not the former.

Another instance of his quiet independence is the proud retention of the title "Babu," which is the equivalent of "Mr." But under British pressure it was translated into something totally inferior and applied to persons of a lower social strata. But, in reality, it may mean "Mr." when prefixed to a name, or "the gentleman" when used in common parlance: hence Rajendra Prasad took a great pride in being styled Babu Rajendra Prasad.

There is not a single person who has associated with him who has not come under the personal charm of Rajendra Prasad's gentle dignity; and whether allied or antagonistic to his principles he has won respect from every side. People of entirely different political outlook have thought it a pleasure and a privilege to be able to work with him, for he represents the highest type of public integrity.

## Chapter 10

### THE YOUNGER SOCIALISTS

THEY are the products of the present age, born out of economic struggles. They are the output of the universities and bred out of intellectual study of the social problems of the day. They are the youth of any country, clear-sighted and straight-visioned, and therefore the backbone of the nation. They are also the disturbers of orthodoxy and conventional ideas and a menace to the power of the older generation. They are the heirs of what their elders have created for them, but are unwilling to recognise their coming of age.

Socialism in India owes its inspiration primarily to Jawaharlal Nehru, and then to Subhas Bose, who are both the leaders of a new age of Indian life. It is they who have introduced the Left element into the Congress and created a doctrine enthusiastically received by the youth of the country. Out of them have been born the Younger Socialists, with all the characteristic impetuosity, exuberance, and love of action. There is a certain intolerance in them for the older, slower ways, which in Nehru and Bose have toned down through maturer wisdom. They have learnt now that very often the older ones, made wiser through experience, speak truly when they counsel prudence and forethought. Thus, when a fair young Socialist remarked to Jawaharlal that,

had he not continually given way to Mahatma Gandhi, Socialism would have become actual by this time, he only smiled, perhaps very tenderly, pitying her youth and understanding her enthusiasm. He too had once been of such material, but then he had had his father's guidance, showing him the advisability of advancing step by step. It was difficult for him now to doubt Gandhi's sagacity, and it was equally difficult for his followers to understand his deferred action.

The inflammable material that had been Subhas Bose, who had never had much patience with the Gandhian way and who had ever led the opposition in the Congress, is now pledged to its executive, upholding its prestige. He who had once had no faith in Gandhi's idea of village reconstruction, whose very enthusiasm had been the greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence, has during these strenuous years yielded to the wisdom of the Gandhian way. Both he and Nehru are unshaken in the belief that the ultimate regeneration of India must be conducted on Socialistic lines, but the immediate goal is independence. All effort must be concentrated on that, and both wings—Right and Left—must unite, so that the flight of the bird be steady and smooth.

In any sphere of life, whenever anything new appears on the horizon the old are afraid. They cry it down, for they are nervous of the usurpation of their powers. Politics is no exception to it. Sardar Vallabhai Patel cried out at the Haripura Congress:

"Let me make it clear that we have tolerated you for two years, but the time has come when we shall no longer tolerate you. We shall now give it back in your own coin."

This was not only undignified but uncalled for, as the open sessions of the Congress have always been regarded as a common platform for registering differences. This was the biggest shock that the Younger Socialists had, though they had for a time been aware that their criticisms were not relished. It was a futile statement on Sardar Patel's part, for no one can afford to do without the youth of the country. From his position of vantage, as a man who has been of untold service to his country, who has undergone great privations for the cause of nationalism, he is of the opinion that these young men and women have not the same right as himself to offer any advice. What have they suffered compared to him? It is the voice of the old régime barring the introduction of revolutionary thoughts. With this in view, he also remarked superciliously:

"I am afraid that they do not seem fully to realise the implications of direct action."

That is as much as to say: What have they done? What do they know? As in other spheres so in politics, youth finds this particularly galling. For they have contributed much, even though they were too young to go to gaol when the older members of the Congress did, or to take part in the Civil Disobedience movements. But they have abandoned

their play times; all their enthusiasm and exuberance they have brought to the service of their country; whatever prospects they may have had of lucrative appointments they have gladly abandoned; many of them have even been to gaol; in many cases they have stood against their fathers and brothers in defence of their principles. Has their contribution been little? In this world the dearth of workers is great, but the Younger Socialists have placed malleable material in the hands of the leaders. True leadership is not to antagonise this spirit of co-operation, not to crush their enthusiasm out of existence, but to mould it gently to the correct paths of political evolution. A dignified reply to Sardar Patel appears from Jayaprakash Narain, a prominent young Socialist, in the columns of the *Congress Socialist*. It is worthy of an older man, and one hopes that the veteran leader had the courage to feel a little ashamed of his outburst. Among other things Jayaprakash Narain remarked:

"I think all of us who were at Haripura realised that with such a background of suspicion and hostility it was not possible to work together. It is clear that no effort should be spared to bridge the gulf, if the strength of the Congress, and even of the 'Left,' are to be developed.

"The prime consideration before us should be not what progress we as a sectarian group are making in the Congress, but what progress the Congress as a whole is making as a result of our efforts; our programme and activities should not be for ourselves

alone but intended to attract the whole Congress mass."

The older generation of the Congress seems bent upon eradicating all criticism from within the organisation. They seem to apprehend a split within the ranks should the Socialists persist. But their vision is so restricted as not to realise that the absence of healthy criticism results in the development of a totalitarian body, which would be disastrous in a nation of such diversities. The "Left" *bloc* is a necessity, and must be Socialist in outlook; healthy and fair criticism must be advocated and handled with a cool mind and calm brain. Internal discussions are the healthiest combatants of a one-sided policy, and especially in India one cannot afford to have autocracy from one dominant group, even in the Congress, which is a representative people's body. Suspicion, hostility and bitterness are most injurious to the cause of independence, and it has come, not from those who could be pardoned on grounds of their youth, but from those grey heads who should know better. So necessary do the Younger Socialists consider the solidarity of the Congress, so undivided is their opinion on the question of a united front, that they are the ones who are ever holding out their hands in comradeship. The want of tolerance, the scorn of their help, reflects to the discredit of those who are older and should, therefore, be wiser. The cause of this enmity between the two "wings" may be put down to the fear of the vested interests should Socialism gain a substantial foothold. There

is a deliberate campaign to exclude this element. It is an aimless and futile attempt, for a party can only exist as long as there is a necessity for it. The people, whose representatives they are, are answerable for their existence, who, in their turn, are responsible for their actions to those who elected them.

This estrangement has grown much greater since the Congress acceptance of ministries. In this both Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose sided with the Younger Socialists, and they were unanimous that this was not the way of combating the Constitution. When, by a large majority, office acceptance came into being, there was nothing left for them to say except that they would, from time to time, point out that the ministries must be faithful to their election manifestos and carry out the Congress programme which included the wrecking of the Constitution. They warned the ministers not to become mere cogs in the wheel of constitutionalism, but be characterised by independent action. The whole country looked up to them for relief from repressive measures, but, except in Orissa and the North-Western Frontier Province, the same repressive laws still remained. No wonder that the Socialists cried out that dyarchy still existed. They were put to great inconvenience in spreading the Socialist programme and formulating its doctrines; there was no substantial relief from the persecution of the old régime. They protested and they criticised, and those in authority disliked this. The non-recognition of their rights



made them hyper-critical, and inclined to exaggerate the ministers' shortcomings while overlooking their achievements; but there was no thought of wishing to discredit the Congress ministers in the eyes of the public. Such a motive was, however, imputed to them. It was their youthful zeal in upholding the Congress programme that made their actions distasteful to those in power. Thus a grave misunderstanding grew up, and an atmosphere of hostility was created between those in command and the Socialist Party. Even their united action with the Right Wing during the last ministerial crisis failed to remove these doubts. It was in connection with the release of political prisoners, one of the many items in the Congress programme, when the ministers of the United Provinces and Bihar resigned because of "unwarranted interference" and refusal to release the prisoners by the governors of those provinces. The Congress with one voice acclaimed the ministers' action, and the Left were ungrudging in their admiration. Thus they showed how able they were in moments of stress to sink all differences and present a united front.

But even the Socialists themselves had not realised the extent of this misunderstanding, and the outbursts of the veterans came as a distinct shock to them. It was a lesson and a pointer to a modification of their ways. It was a severe threat against the solidarity of the Congress, which was their chief care. The Right is not only to blame, for the Left has made a great mistake in identifying the majority

party with the entire Congress organisation. It has resulted in an introduction of sectarianism, which holds untold possibilities for evil unless immediately remedied. Quite possibly their constant emphasis on Right and Left had irritated the leaders; for, if taken collectively, the Congress is more inclined "Left" than "Right" with regard to its programme and resolutions. But the older ones have been impatient with those who, in their youthful eagerness, have advocated immediate action. They have never given them any understanding; from the beginning they have treated them with suspicion. At the present moment, when the goal of every Nationalist in India is independence, there is no Right and there is no Left. Later, when the furtherance of this objective, on a socio-economic basis, appears to be hampered unless conducted on Socialistic lines, there will be ample time to differentiate. It is true that the two *blocs* do exist, but under the supreme organisation of the Congress. Neither should forget that they are but limbs of a vast body, who must work in concord to achieve any real progress. While each side may represent a different political outlook, they must in times of crisis and distress be at one with each other. Mr. Masani, the spokesman of the Socialist Party, asserted that "the Congress should not have more than one voice," showing great sagacity and revealing political potentialities within himself. Though he has been the most critical of Congressmen towards the ministries, and has been seriously handicapped by them in his

Socialist propaganda, he showed great courage in voicing his appreciation. It is typical of youth to bestow ungrudging appreciation, while the older men find it hard to forgive criticisms of the past. There can only be one national organisation in charge of national freedom, but its power would only be further strengthened by the greater tolerance of the veteran leaders for the younger group, who only reflect the go-ahead radicalism of youthful spirits in public life. Internal feuds amongst men of patriotic spirit is most harmful, and old scores are best wiped out in the spirit of co-operation. Though the Socialists should be rebuked when, through want of adequate leadership, they embark upon purposeless academic discussions, some indulgence should be shown to them when they show a willingness to identify themselves with the rest of the Congress. Should they disturb or threaten its unity, no mercy need be shown them, but their desire to be articulate should not be punished and pursued with condemnation.

The Congress ministries have made a mistake in taking it for granted that the Socialist opposition towards their acceptance of office would degenerate into deliberate hindering of their duties. With this fear in their hearts they have thought nothing of forcefully curbing Socialist activities. The Socialists, on the other hand, have asserted that the ministers were not living up to their election manifestos. Two special items have caused much agitation—the restoration of civil liberties and the release of political

prisoners. The ministers had put forward the excuse that wholesale release would mean an element of violence creeping into the Congress ranks. It seems a mere reiteration of pre-provincial autonomy sentiments, and has a familiar sound about it. However, the ministers of the United Provinces and Bihar have shown their powers of independent action and merited the hearty praise from the Socialists. In the event of Federation materialising, the younger group have time and again pressed for a plan of direct action. They have even suggested that, as a counter-blast, a miniature constituent assembly should be set up. But somehow any call for direct action has invariably brought down a host of indictments upon their heads. The *Kisan Sabhas* (peasant organisations) under the leadership of the Socialists, and hitherto sponsored by the Congress, have come in for criticism and disciplinary action. They have been considered a menace to the Government in Bihar and outlawed by the Provincial Congress Committee. Much bitterness and disappointment have been occasioned by this, and Jayaprakash Narain said, more in sorrow than in anger: "This is part of the drive which the Right Wing has long been planning against the Left." It showed a clear demarcation between the Rightist and Leftist ideologies and a terrible want of understanding.

In what do the Younger Socialists believe? What is their mission? How far are they removed from the Gandhian way? These are all very pertinent questions. The Younger Socialists believe in the rule

of the people, they represent the masses and their demands. They look up to the Soviet Union for their inspiration, and they are confident that in Socialism lies the ultimate salvation of India. With this in view it is their mission to keep it before the people, to make them realise their duties towards each other. They are the promoters of the mass contact movement, which has helped in no small measure to fight communalism. Though Socialism is not the immediate objective, it cannot be put away and brought out at will. The Younger Socialists must remain within the Congress to influence its future policy. There is a fear that it might degenerate into a reformist party like the British Labour Party, but it is unlikely as long as they live in close touch with the masses, working for them. Also, the British Labour Party fell because of certain concessions made to it by the capitalists, which the British Government in India is hardly likely to do. The principal rôle of the Socialists at present is to provide a link between the masses and the Congress, which represents the anti-Imperialist struggle. With this objective all peasants' and workers' unions were affiliated to the Congress. Thus through the Socialists the people had found a voice and a place in the future republic of India. They are endeavouring to draw the poor and the lower middle classes more and more into the national struggle. To them *swaraj* means the solution of the problems of poverty and unemployment, which is only possible by the transference of economic power to the people in general.

They occupy the key position between the Congress and the real sources of national strength—the peasants, the workers, and the lower middle classes. As such there is no use minimizing their importance.

They are in unison with Gandhism, to the extent of identifying Socialism with Nationalism. But, at the same time, they feel that a change of outlook is necessary. The Congress programme of Prohibition, *Khadi* and Village Industries did take them nearer the masses, but the Socialist policy of organising peasants' and workers' unions enables them to explain the manner of their exploitation. They wish to carry on a radical awakening by which the people will be alive to their needs. But the Right is afraid of this type of mass consciousness, which will result in upheavals and ruining the present régime of landlords and antagonising them. The Socialists recognise that the principal problems are economic, and therefore their forces must be organised on that basis. Though there are many fundamental differences between Gandhism and Socialism, they are not so diametrically opposite that they cannot work together. Provided there is a spirit of co-operation, and adjustments are made to avoid clashes, it is quite possible for each to be of help to the other. On the road to independence they can march shoulder to shoulder, for the common goal should prove a common bond, and with toleration on both sides this should remain unbroken.

The international outlook of the Younger Socia-

lists has earned for them world-wide recognition. They have never sought to restrict their vision, sympathy or activities. They have thought and worked in terms of international comradeship, and have not tried to confine themselves within their social or geographical boundaries. For this broadness and depth of vision Jawaharlal Nehru is more responsible than anybody else. It was he who taught India to look upon her troubles from the angle of world affairs and fit herself into the mosaic of international events.

Spain and China have received their full share of sympathy from India, though her resources are at present limited. She is still tied to the chariot of Imperialism and cannot show her sympathy in a more concrete fashion.

It is the young who have realised how irrevocably any idea of world peace is interwoven with the freedom of India. Thus the Younger Socialists are singularly free from exclusiveness of any sort whatever. Their ranks are open to men and women from every province, irrespective of caste or creed. There is a singular absence of difference—sex, birth, breeding, and education have all merged themselves into a common cause. The difficulties in their way have been responsible for welding them into a solid body and sinking their personal differences. There are within the fold of the Socialist Party men from English public schools and the 'Varsities, others from the Bar, some from the Indian universities, women who have championed their own rights

hitherto and now those of the depressed, sons and daughters of rich men, whose fathers and brothers have been in Government service, and who are now converted to Socialistic ideas. Of such a family came Sajjad Zaheer, the son of Sir Wazir Hasan, who has by his own efforts brought his Socialist doctrines to bear upon his father and brothers. Masani, of a rich Parsi family, gave up his practice at the Bar to become Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party. Every one of them—Yusuf Meheraly, Rammonohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narain, Achyut Patwardhan, Mahmood Uzzaffarkhan, Professor Ranga, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya—have all chosen this road in preference to a more lucrative and influential position, which could have been theirs, to work for those who are disabled by want of education, and they have pledged themselves to awakening them to their own deficiencies. Their own education and comfortable circumstances have opened their eyes to the plight of the majority of the population of India. They have given up everything but a meagre allowance by taking up Socialism. It has become the mission of this courageous band to practise what they preach and to develop personal contacts with the masses. Under their guidance trade unions, peasant organisations, workers' unions, labour unions, and students' unions have taken shape. They devote their entire time and energy in trying to direct all these forces, hitherto untapped, into channels of constructive activity. There is great evidence of an organising capacity and method in the administration



of these elements, as well as in the maintenance of discipline. In whatever they do they are characterised by a thoroughness and sincerity, and for them there is no looking backward. It is this intense desire for national progress that makes them constantly cry out for "direct action," causing apprehension among the more cautious and prudent leaders.

Very often their criticisms savour of want of respect and appreciation for those who have hitherto guided the destiny of nationalism. But that is wrong; though, in the excesses of their youthful exuberance, they are led away into extravagant gestures, they can never forget the deep debt they owe to those who have lit the torch of freedom for them. It is their eagerness to carry this light forward into every home dark and dank with poverty and want that is often mistaken as a desire to grasp power. Yet about their youthfulness there is a dignity and repose which would well become older heads. They are anxious to see the furtherance of their schemes for the people in general, and it is little they desire for themselves. It is their duty to prepare the ground for Socialism, once political freedom has been achieved. As such, it is detrimental to the welfare of the nation to try and crush the Socialist Party out of existence in the Congress.

The Younger Socialists came into existence with the blessing of Jawaharlal Nehru, and have made a lasting impression upon the whole country. Their work will devolve on the achievement of an independent India; at present they are of vital necessity in

attaining that objective. The absence of patience and tolerance might endanger their co-operation and embitter them. In the meantime, the sympathy of Pandit Nehru and Subhas Bose is their greatest asset and incentive to carry forward their mission.

## Chapter II

# TERRORISM

BENGAL has within the last few years been given a great deal of publicity as the home of terrorism and anarchy, but no attempt is made to reveal the significance of the development of such a state of affairs. The psychological explanation can be traced back to the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Macaulay in his *Essays* spoke thus of Bengalis:

What the Italian is to the Englishman, what the Hindoo is to the Italian, what the Bengalee is to other Hindoos, that was Nuncomar to other Bengalees. The physical organisation of the Bengalee is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. Courage, independence, veracity are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable. His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance; but its suppleness and its tact move the children of sterner climates to admiration not unmingled with contempt. All those arts which are the natural defence of the weak are more familiar to this subtle race than to the Ionian of the time of Juvenal, or to the Jew of the Dark Ages. What the horns are to the buffalo, what the paw is to the tiger, what the sting is to the bee, what beauty according to the old Greek song, is to woman, deceit is to the Bengalee. Large promises, smooth excuses, elaborate tissues of circumstances, falsehood, chica-

nery, perjury, forgery are the weapons, offensive and defensive, of the people of the Lower Ganges. All those millions do not furnish one sepoy to the armies of the Company. But as usurers, as money-changers, as sharp legal practitioners, no class of human beings can bear a comparison with them. With all his softness the Bengalee is by no means placable in his enmities or prone to pity. The pertinacity with which he adheres to his purpose yields only to the immediate pressure of fear. Nor does he lack a certain kind of courage, which is often wanting to his masters. To inevitable evils he is sometimes found to oppose a passive fortitude, such as the Stoics attributed to their ideal sage. An European warrior, who rushes on a battery of cannon with a loud hurrah, will sometimes shriek under the surgeon's knife and fall into an agony of despair at the sentence of death. But the Bengalee, who would see his country overrun, his house laid in ashes, his children murdered or dishonoured, without having the spirit to strike one blow, has yet been known to endure torture with the firmness of Mucius, and to mount the scaffold with the steady step and even pulse of Algernon Sydney.

And this rankled deep in the minds of the people, who were made to learn these *Essays* in schools and colleges. The behaviour of the British and the brutal treatment of individuals, which was of daily occurrence, were other factors in increasing the feeling of resentment. Bengalis brooded over the fact that the Britisher understood only strength, for day in and day out they saw themselves the victims of brow-beating foreigners. A man in a *dhoti* often was not allowed to walk on the same pavement as a European; soldiers were frequently seen hustling and

abusing Indians in the road, or they would go into a market and make themselves free with fruit and vegetables, whilst nobody dared to protest for fear of assault. Complaints were useless, for justice never took its course with the white man. They pursued their way with impunity, because of their might.

In colleges insults were hurled at individuals, as well as at the entire nation, by professors, who in spite of their education and culture sank to the level of the "Tommy" where their treatment of Bengalis was concerned. Every incident of their daily lives brought out forcibly to the student world that Britain would respect only force. Macaulay's words recurred to their minds over and over again, and there rose within them the desire to vindicate the honour of Bengal, to prove to the world that Bengalis were not cowards or weaklings, that they were equally capable of heroism. With this in view, there developed autonomous clubs for physical culture, which had at that time no other ideal but that of promoting the nation's physical development. Old forms of sport—fencing, dagger play, etc.—were revived, and added to these were gymnastics and other forms of physical culture. Revolvers and bombs were far from their thoughts then.

As a direct result of these activities the boys improved in health and physique and developed a new outlook that would stand no bullying or intimidation from the foreigner. Whenever necessary they retaliated, and re-discovered the efficacy of brute force. They enjoyed their new-found power to the

fullest, and very soon a certain amount of respect was shown to them by the Britisher. Seeing that the wrongs of their daily lives were thus quickly avenged by a display of physical strength, they turned their eyes towards the oppression of the people by the officials. This was the beginning of the terrorist outbreak as far back as 1905. Police officers and magistrates, by their cruelty and brutality, are responsible for the crop of shooting incidents that occurred. In every case it will be found that only those who oppressed were thus treated. Finding that there were no laws over those who terrorised over their own people, these boys proposed to take the law into their own hands and terrorise over them. Also they had found that agitation and petitioning had got India no further, and more than ever they wished to vindicate the contempt shown to Bengal by Britain, as voiced by Macaulay. It was the essayist who was primarily responsible for stirring up this bloody feud. There was something gallant, though utterly ineffectual, about a handful of young boys pitted against a whole empire, with its vast armies and weapons. But at this time they enjoyed the sympathy of the majority of the people, who were tired of talk that brought nothing but repression and ignominy in its wake. Actual participators in the movement were few, but sympathy was more or less universal. The Indian nation was just beginning to get restive at this time, but uncertain as to which way lay salvation, and therefore there was admiration for those who had found the courage for some course

of action. Though they achieved little even in the matter of mere killing, it showed the awakening of an active spirit of nationalism, seeking redress for wrongs.

The moving spirit of the revolutionaries of that age was Aurobindo Ghose, a man of great intellectual ability. Educated in an absolutely alien atmosphere, at a very early age he had been sent to St. Paul's School, London, and then to the Universities of Cambridge and London. His University record was unique, and he passed into the I.C.S., ranking fifth in order of merit. But his miserable failure in the riding examination disqualified him from the Civil Service. The Gaekwar of Baroda, however, recognising the outstanding merits of this man, took him into his service as principal of his State College.

A stranger as he was to the manners and customs of his own country, Aurobindo set out to familiarise himself with everything indigenous, including his native language, Bengali. It was during his twelve years' stay in Baroda that he also made himself conversant with the affairs of his land. When he finally emerged from his seclusion to take a prominent part in the Nationalist movement, it was during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon and the memorable Partition of Bengal. There was widespread dissatisfaction and agitation, which culminated in April 1908 in the bomb explosion of Muzaffarpur, as a result of which two European women were killed. The bomb had been intended for the magistrate, whose oppressive behaviour had made life intolerable

for the people in his district. Unfortunately, on that fateful day he had not gone for his usual evening drive, and when the bomb hit the carriage there were only two women in it. There was a terrible outcry, searches and raids followed, and dumps of ammunition, etc., were discovered in Aurobindo's Calcutta home. Government saw in this plot the hand of Aurobindo Ghose, and he was arrested in Calcutta.

His trial at the sessions was dramatic in its intensity. Alipore Court in Calcutta on a hot day in May—even electric fans failed to give relief—while Judge and accused had taken their respective places. Mr. Beechcroft, I.C.S., was the magistrate, and he surveyed the prisoner curiously; while the latter inspected idly this man upon whom depended his very life. The look of idle curiosity gave place to recognition, and both were transported to other days and other lands, nearly two decades previous. To Beechcroft came memories of the examination in Greek, when Aurobindo had stood first and he second; into Aurobindo's mind flashed a remembrance of the riding test, in which he had failed and Beechcroft had passed. Now they stood face to face—comrades of eighteen years ago, Judge and accused.

The historic trial proceeded for twelve months, and all the prisoners except Aurobindo were found guilty; some were condemned to die, while others were doomed to a death in life in the Andamans. Aurobindo was released on May 6, 1909, after a



year's imprisonment. He took refuge in Pondicherry, the French colony in India, and out of the firebrand Nationalist emerged an ascetic, as he remains to-day.

Violence suffered a setback at this stage, especially after the summary disposal of the leaders, and it took refuge in underground activities. There was an ominous inactivity. In the meantime the spirit of nationalism was growing, and in non-co-operation was found a substitute more effective than violence, and public opinion veered towards it. Gandhiji and C. R. Das consulted the erstwhile revolutionaries, and put before them the programme of non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience. They recognised the wisdom of this new weapon of retaliation and promised to give it a fair trial. The old spirits became ardent Congress workers, but, as is ever the case, the younger ones chafed against passive resistance. Thus in Bengal with its background of insults and ignominy, memories of the spirit of Macaulay, and effective appliance of force, the cult of violence was only dormant.

Repression was increased a hundredfold, and the depredations of the police knew no bounds. In the face of civil disobedience they were given untold powers, in which they were aided by those in authority. Young boys with customary impatience saw only the pitiless subjection of those who dared to struggle; they saw no brighter future or prospect of achieving freedom from the British thrall. Indignities were heaped upon the heads of those who took part in the movement, and even women were not

exempted after a time. *Lathi* charges by the police were frequent, and they ruthlessly inflicted severe injuries upon the persons of the passive resisters. There was suffering all round, unmitigated by a ray of hope of better conditions to come. The massacre at Jallianwallah had shown what force and violence could do to an unarmed people. The proclamation of martial law from time to time had also revealed the long arm of bureaucracy. Respectable citizens of the Punjab were made to crawl on their stomachs through the streets of Amritsar, as a punishment for their independent views. Bengal watched and brooded and waited for the accomplishment of *swaraj* through non-violence. People were growing tired of constant imprisonment, and the ensuing inhumanity of the prison authorities. In prison they were treated like animals, and no consideration of any sort was shown to them. The indignities did not decrease, dyarchy reigned with a vengeance, and the authorities showed clearly that every kind of force was going to be exerted to quell the rising spirit. Police and soldiers opened fire on mobs, several were killed at each affray, but still the Government persisted in its policy of repression. One incident, among many such, is illuminating enough. A magistrate (in the I.C.S.), upon finding a man selling *Khaddar*, tied him to his horse while he cantered several miles into the civil station. This was exemplary of the arbitrary behaviour of the officials, against which there was no appeal. The people suffered physical, mental, and economic tortures, and Bengal, with its background

of violence, tugged hard at the leash. Still all waited sullenly and saw the Rowlatt Bill become an Act, the first of the "lawless" laws. This Act delivered unrestricted power into the hands of the police, and placed all persons in perpetual danger of arrest upon the discretion of the police. Tortures and third degree methods became of constant occurrence day in and day out. Youth watched its fathers and brothers suffer untold agonies at the hands of the police. Innocent and guilty fared alike; arrests and imprisonments on suspicion were the order of the day.

The new generation of Bengalis saw only violence on all sides, watched patient suffering rewarded by blows, discovered in the crucifixion of Gandhiji's followers the ineffectiveness of non-violence. The doctrine of civil disobedience inflamed their spirit of revolt against oppression, but they failed to see that the creed of non-violence can only prove efficacious through time. They waxed impatient, and all the past indignities and insults rose up anew before their eyes. Their reasoning power was warped, for they did not realise that an unarmed people cannot fight with violent methods against a nation equipped with the most efficient army and navy in the world. Their immediate sufferings blinded them to the wisdom of circumventing Britain's exploitation of India by the propagation of *swadeshi* and the stoppage of revenues through non-payment of taxes and rents. All that they saw before their eyes were the police aggressions upon their near and dear ones and the heavy hand of Imperialism upon the nation.

In Sir Charles Tegart, the then Commissioner of Police in Calcutta, the Bengalis saw the driving power of the police force, the originator of all the ingenious methods of torture. In his annihilation, they thought, lay some measure of relief for the convicted persons. With this end in view came the first terrorist outrage, called the Day Murder. A young man named Gopinath Saha unfortunately mistook a Mr. Day for Tegart, and shot him. He was arrested and sentenced to death, but thereafter hell was let loose in the province. Police aggressions and oppression became more brutal than ever, and shooting tragedies more frequent. It was a vicious circle, in which the people of Bengal suffered the most. Even to this day she has not been able to recover from the price that was extorted from her then.

The people of the country have been blamed for fêting the "murderers," while advocating Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence. It has been thought lip service to Gandhiji, while in their hearts they had no faith in his creed. It would have been grossly unfair not to extol the patriotism, however misguided and misdirected, of these youths, who courted their own destruction in trying to destroy those whom they counted enemies of their people. From the time they embarked upon these activities they knew that the sun of their lives was about to plunge into the unknown, but not once did they flinch or hesitate. It showed a great courage and conviction, for that alone could have been their inspiration to face death before even they had commenced to live. Whether

their attempts were successful or not, they knew that they could never hope to escape, and even when they mounted the gallows it was in the same dauntless manner. Was it wrong, therefore, for the older and wiser to reflect sorrowfully, as once did a French general watching the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava: "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre!"

One of their cleverest attempts, but one which also came to naught, was the Chittagong Armoury Raid. Indians being denied the use of arms without licence, perhaps the idea was to capture the ammunition for the use of the people. The two leaders appeared one evening at the armoury in the garb of Army officers, demanding the keys. The sentries in charge saw nothing doubtful about them and delivered the keys, after which they were bound and gagged by the men. Thereafter they proceeded to load the contents of the armoury into a lorry. It was an auspicious night they had chosen, for there was a dance at the club, where the entire European population was congregated. Unfortunately for them, the Commanding Officer had dallied upstairs in his quarters, and while they were finishing their task he came upon them. The terrorists begged him to depart, saying they had no wish to harm him; but he, true to his duty, opposed them. Having no other option, they shot him and fled with the ammunition. For several weeks they held the city of Chittagong, carrying on a miniature war with the Government forces, showing themselves proficient

with machine guns, rifles and revolvers. Macaulay was being truly avenged! The timely appearance of a British destroyer saved what might have become an uncomfortable situation.

Ruthless arrests followed, no respect to property or persons was shown, and the help of Gurkhas and Pathans was requisitioned to facilitate in the carriage of repressive measures. Outrages of every description were prevalent, and no place was free from the inroads of the police. There was a round-up of innocent and guilty persons alike, and without any trial whatever they were imprisoned. Women were exposed to the debauchery of soldiers and police; young girls arrested as revolutionaries were left in lock-up to the tender mercies of police sergeants. Such treatment Bina Das saw meted out that her young blood cried aloud for justice, but none was forthcoming. This was the cause of her attempt on the life of Sir Stanley Jackson. She herself said that she was free from personal animosity towards Sir Stanley, but to her he was the figurehead of the régime that looked on benignly at the wanton behaviour of its representatives. Even when she was in prison awaiting trial, baits were dangled before her eyes, if she would betray those who had given her her instructions.

The hand of the world has been heavy against Bengal, she has suffered severe indictment, because even her women were not free from the taint of violence. It was thought incredible that they should have so far betrayed their womanhood as deliberately

to shoot down unsuspecting persons. But did no one ever try to fathom the tragedies that lay behind these incidents? Did nobody ever try to visualise the circumstances that forced the revolver into the tender grip of girls of fifteen or so? For them their future was one of bright expectation, of marriage and motherhood and a happy home life; therefore a mighty force must have driven them voluntarily to renounce these things for the dangerous life of a revolutionary. Nobody cared to look into the incidents of their daily life, where shame and disgrace dogged the steps of respectable women. In the hill tracts no Bengali girl of good family was free from the attentions of magistrates, who exploited their position of authority. Therefore two young girls sought to end the degradation by making an example of a certain magistrate. To them it appeared that brutality must be paid back in its own coin, and boldly they walked up to him in his office and shot him dead. They knew they would be immediately arrested, but preserved a calm and courageous attitude then, as later when under trial. Their courage did not desert them even when they were transported for life. The whole world was shocked by this "revolting" incident, by what was called the "shameless" conduct of these girls, but none knew what was behind. Even when a member said of another at the Assembly: "Let him go and ask the brave girls of Bengal why they have committed these deeds," it was slurred over and no proper investigations were made.

In terrorism Britain saw a fit weapon wherewith to fight the growing sympathy for the Congress, which was becoming worldwide. The ethics of the efficacy of non-violence had created a stir amongst the other nations, it had proved the power of an unarmed country to prevent further exploitation. This sympathy was injurious to the British prestige, a serious setback to British credit before the world. Gandhi, as the apostle of this doctrine and unquestioned leader of the Indian people, attained a universal importance, but ingeniously Britain tried to show that the leadership of Gandhi was fictitious, that the Congress and its creed of non-violence was in reality a cloak for the perpetrations of brutal acts. Solitary cases were given publicity, but not a word was said as to what had led to them. The solidarity of the Indian people would provoke world-wide agitation, hence this must be made to seem non-existent. When necessary Gandhiji's speeches were quoted condemning violence, and Nehru and Subhas Bose shown as sympathisers of the cult of terrorism. This gave the necessary appearance of a rift in the Nationalist camp, while Congressmen, innocent of any participation in violence, were arrested and detained without trial. Police manufactured evidence, planted revolvers and bombs where necessary, and even engineered bomb explosions in the neighbourhoods where arrests were necessary. Thus it happened that more innocent than guilty were taken into custody, and before the intervention of Gandhiji there were 3,500 *detenus* in Bengal alone. On the



books it was shown that the revolutionaries were recruited from amongst Congress workers, and often from the provincial executives. It was arbitrarily settled that these were the guilty persons. No defence or appeal was heard from them; they were the victims of the numerous ordinances which had been proclaimed over the whole country.

Special legislation was one of the principal modes of repression, and its temporary character was deplored by the old bureaucratic spirit still existent in India amongst a certain class of highly paid mercantile men and Government officials. The civil liberties of the people were circumscribed to the extreme, and the everyday lives of the people were continually disturbed by the attentions of the police. Respectable and innocent persons were subjected to all manner of humiliations, which the arbitrary powers of these ordinances made possible. The police and the British Press in India agitated for these ordinances to pass into permanent legislature. The ordinances embraced a wide sphere—some of the powers conferred upon District Magistrates included commandeering property, limiting access to certain places, regulating traffic and transport, and imposing collective fines upon inhabitants. They also provided for special tribunals and special magistrates, and a procedure designed to speed the trials, which made a mockery of real justice. Apart from this, heavy censorship and Press Acts came into being, leaving the people inarticulate before the world. Collectively, they were thus condemned before being heard.

Furthermore, the District Magistrate was empowered to deal with individuals in the following manner:

(a) He shall reside in any house or quarters in the district specified in the order, or with any relative so specified who is resident in the district;

(b) not absent himself from his place of residence between the hours specified in the order;

(c) not pay visit to, or receive visits from, any person who is not a permanent resident of any area specified in the order, or whose name has been communicated to him in this behalf in writing by any officer of Government so specified;

(d) not enter or remain in any place or area in the district specified in the order;

(e) not converse, communicate or associate with any person specified in the order or with members of any society, library, *akhara*, club, or gymnasium so specified;

(f) withdraw from membership of any society, library, *akhara*, club, or gymnasium specified in the order;

(g) attend or refrain from attending any school, college or educational institution specified in the order;

(h) proceed to and from any place or places specified in the order by routes so specified;

(i) report himself at intervals specified in the order to any officer of Government so specified;

(j) submit diaries of his doings and movements

at intervals specified in the order to any officer of Government so specified;

(*k*) deliver unopened immediately after receipt, or submit before issue, to any officer of Government specified in the order all correspondence (including telegrams and postal and other packages) received or proposed to be issued by him;

(*l*) not read, subscribe to, receive or have in his possession any book, magazine, pamphlet, or newspaper specified in the order;

(*m*) give information of any attempt by any person to induce him to disobey any direction contained in the order to any officer of Government specified in the order;

(*n*) conduct himself in such a manner, generally or particularly, or abstain from such acts, as may be specified in the order.

It was the masses which suffered, and they lived like rats in their holes for fear of arrest, but terrorism still flourished. Curfew order was proclaimed in all the "most notorious" districts, and indiscriminate arrests followed on any youths outside their doors after sunset. It is interesting to note that all these edicts were directed against Hindu *bhadralog* (respectable) youths between twenty and thirty years of age. It provides a unique study of Government's bid for Muslim support and the fermenting of a communal spirit.

But if the people lived fearfully, the officials lived no less fearfully, and once more proved to the

apostles of violence that Britain respected and feared only such methods. Magistrates of every district in Bengal were provided with Pathan guards, who stood on guard with open revolvers behind the screens even while their masters played tennis at a European club or in the house of a private individual. Prison authorities and district officers were afraid of sleeping in the same room every night, in spite of their personal and police guards. Their daily walks were taken under the strict vigilance of their guards, who walked before and after them with loaded revolvers, while the men themselves also carried loaded revolvers and looked to right and left furtively. It was a pitiful state of affairs, and evidence that Imperialism would only be afraid of those who were bold enough to hit back, but remain obdurate to the voice of legitimate demands.

Terrorism to-day is non-existent, even though it prospered in the face of repression. Also the many indignities which the people had to suffer daily are no more now, but isolated cases do occur, although these are the exceptions and not the rule. The conquerors have learnt to respect the conquered. What the many ordinances and their mischievous perpetrators could not accomplish the Congress bid for mass contact has been successful in doing. It has shown to the advocates of violence that the capture of power is not through killing, that such a policy is most inopportune, and that the strength of the country lies in organising the peasants and labourers into a disciplined body. The tapping of this resource

will prove much more effective than a few murders here and there, for which thousands of innocent people have to suffer.

The bulk of these would to-day be eking out a weary existence in gaol had the Congress not pledged itself to their liberation. Concerning what such prisons are, and how they have wrecked the health of thousands, the words of C. F. Andrews are revealing enough:

"I have received from leaders, men of unchallengeable veracity, accounts (some in writing) of things unspeakably evil which they have witnessed with their own eyes while in prison during non-co-operation days—how wretched prisoners, fellow human beings were trussed like fowls and beaten and then forced through abject terror to do humiliating acts, which degrade the very soul; how men of gentle breeding have been put to intolerable shame by being compelled to expose themselves before others while performing their natural functions, how refined men have been handcuffed and locked up in the darkness in solitude till they have nearly gone mad; how others have been forced to live and sleep in cells where lingering germs of disease were likely to infect them; how the brave freedom of spirit has been deliberately broken by all kinds of petty torture."

It is not to be supposed that if non-violent prisoners were thus treated, the violent ones were accorded a more gentle treatment. Not only they, but those of their families outside prison were per-

secuted relentlessly, until they were reduced to the verge of destitution. Constant spying by men and women, who were reputed as gaol visitors of the *detenus*, upon their families debarred them from finding adequate employment anywhere. All doors were closed to the relatives of *detenus*. Thus when some of them were released, they became only an additional liability upon their families, and the joy of freedom was lost in the fear of the future. Others, ruined in body and spirit, merely crept back home to die. Unemployment stared most of them in the face, for capitalism was afraid of Government action should it find work for these boys. It was a new world to which they returned, unaccustomed and dazed by the changes, and they found it extremely difficult to discover a proper place in it.

The Congress ministries have lived up to their election manifestos with regard to the release of political prisoners. The last deadlock in Bihar and the United Provinces was an outcome of this issue, for the Governors refused to sanction indiscriminate release, even though the ministers took upon themselves the responsibility of safeguarding public peace. A decision satisfactory to both parties has, however, been reached and successive individual releases have been effected. But Bengal, whose quota of *detenus* is the highest, is still under a régime that is afraid of releasing all the prisoners. A good many, at the intervention of Gandhiji, have been liberated, but many still remain behind bars. Each and every one of the *detenus* have forsworn their creed of

violence and, under the influence of Gandhiji, unconditionally accepted the ethics of non-violence. He has proved to the entire country the efficacy of his weapon and convinced one and all of his countrymen that it is more effective. Indian credit before the world to-day stands much higher through the success of his doctrine than it ever did before.

## Chapter 12

### COMMUNALISM

THIS problem, which looms large on the horizon of Indian politics and has been represented as the greatest hindrance to national unity, constitutes in itself an interesting study of British exploitation. It is entirely out of Britain's policy of divide and rule that communalism has been born and has grown to such adult proportions. To the modern youth of the intelligentsia it is a source of constant wonder how this could have been fermented, and to such an extent as to develop into an actual and serious problem. Education in politics and national life has endowed the average Indian of to-day with such a clarified vision that Britain's dual policy stands before them revealed in all its crudity.

India has never been an intolerant country, and though her people may have maintained a serene aloofness from extraneous elements, religious persecutions have been comparatively few. As far back as the third century A.D., Syrians, led by St. Thomas of Cana, are reported to have landed on the west coast of South India. The descendants of their converts, though a small minority, still exist in Malabar and are known as Syrian Christians. The Parsees, or "Fire Worshippers," fled from the hands of the Islamised Persians and found sanctuary in India. For centuries now the Bombay Presidency



has been their home. With the coming of the Moghuls, Islam crept into the country. But under all the Emperors, save the bigoted Aurangzeb, Hindus were shown every kind of tolerance. It is true that, about this time and later, too, several high-caste Hindus embraced Islam. It can only be deduced that this was to curry greater favour with the Imperial Court at Delhi. Difference in philosophy, ideals and culture kept Hindus and Muslims from intermarrying and mixing socially, but they were not divided into watertight compartments as they are now. The only feeling of disturbance at the beginning was that of conqueror and conquered; but, as the Muslims gradually settled down in India and made it their home, they became part of the nation. Muslims and Hindus lived side by side, imbibing many of each other's customs. Britain's overthrow of Muhammadan supremacy, if possible, brought the conquered races nearer to each other. The Mutiny of 1857 showed up this alliance ominously, and Britain realised that a better organised and more powerful rallying of Hindus and Muslims would be extremely dangerous to her interests in India.

It was about this time that the seeds of communalism were first widely and carefully sown. It began with the suppression of Muslims and the favouring of the Hindus. The former, with their recent memories of rule in India, were considered dangerous, and also they did not take kindly to the European form of education. The latter, on the other

hand, after years of subjugation, had imbibed the full benefits of such an education and took peacefully to clerical jobs. Their docility was in great contrast to the aggressive attitude of the Muslims, and for this the British Government smiled upon them benignly. But this new culture had also an untoward effect, which, even in its embryonic stage, Britain realised as inimical to her interests. This was the first appearance of nationalism amongst the upper-class, English-speaking intelligentsia. Even though this found its inspiration from the Liberal leaders of England—Gladstone, Bright, etc.—it reflects to the eternal credit of British statesmanship to read a note of danger in it.

There was a visible change from that time onwards; it was a well-laid and well-thought-out scheme, deliberately and, at first unobtrusively, launched. The Government made a bid for Muslim favour, with a view to keeping them from the national outlook, which was gradually developing. To gain contact with the Muslims would have been initially difficult, but in this they found an unexpected ally in Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who was inspired with the true interests of his community and by his sincere admiration for the British. He spoke in extravagant terms of the culture of England and the direct contrast of the inhabitants there and here. Maybe his language was deliberately strong to waken the Muslims from their mental stagnation; whatever it was, he became a successful ambassador of Western education and culture amongst them. It

was a move in the right direction, for without it the Muslims would always have had to play a secondary rôle to the Hindus. Nevertheless, Sir Syed's assertions regarding the British Empire appear strange in the light of present-day politics, for it is doubtful if even the landed proprietors would dare to use such language to-day.

At this time there was evidence of two democracies. That of the Hindus, from its vantage of over half a century of Western education, was composed largely of the bourgeoisie, and had begun to indulge in mild criticism of the Government and its policy. This was the birth of the Indian National Congress, which spoke then in very humble tones of reproach. The "democracy of Islam," under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, turned away from the Congress, for it was comprised of landholders, to which a handful of well-to-do Muslims belonged. Zealously they pursued their way towards attaining the same height of education as the Hindus, and now the sun of British favour shone upon them. Though at that moment the Hindus were still foremost in every field, gradually the Muslims were coming up. At this stage the Hindu-Muslim question may be determined as: the Muslim landlords dominating over the rising middle-class Hindus; the Hindu landlords were more or less indifferent towards the bourgeoisie under them, but were not obstructive. On both sides the masses and the lower middle class were not considered at all. The British supported feudalism.

The materialisation of the Aligarh College for Muslims was the first concrete example of how far Western education had penetrated amongst them. It was a most successful experiment, and seemed to embody the firstfruits of Sir Syed's work. But with feudalism lingering amongst even the enlightened Muslims a narrow outlook was developed. It was sufficient for a student to be able to get into Government service. He asked for nothing more, his imagination of wider spheres was restricted. Perhaps this may also have been due to the absence of any real leader amongst them; it was Sir Syed's obsolete theories that still guided them. Those ideas had done their work and should have taken on a different tone with changing times, but there was nobody to inspire and voice it. This craze for Government service was not confined only to the Muslims, for Hindu students were equally anxious for it. Unfortunately, their numerical strength was far too great, and there were not enough jobs to go round, so eventually their disappointment forced their intellectual capabilities into other channels. They formed the backbone of the revolutionary movement.

During the time when Europe plunged into its deathly orgy, things were shaping very differently in India. Another element was making itself felt, the Muslim bourgeoisie were beginning to feel their restrictions; they were developing a national outlook. Nationalism had become something more than a dangerous and therefore attractive subject; it was rapidly becoming vital to all alike. When the Great

War came to an end, leaving a trail of mutilated minds and bodies, when in 1919 Gandhi began his non-co-operation movement, he carried in his wake several of the Muslim intelligentsia, who were later to become bulwarks in the fight against communalism. Such figures were Dr. M. A. Ansari and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, but not Mr. Jinnah, who at this juncture quietly dropped out, only to appear later in an entirely different rôle.

As British policy regarded this as an entirely undesirable state of affairs, communal feelings were not allowed to die down, and the glowing embers were fanned by backward and reactionary elements at first on the side of the Muslims. For this they were rewarded by high Government favours. At this time the Hindu Maha-Sabha came into prominence. Actually, it had very little power over the Congress, but enhanced communal tension greatly. Seeing how through these channels the Muslims were winning favour from those in authority, Hindu communal politicians determined to try the same tactics. Jobs and seats in the legislatures were insufficient, so the sectarians fought over them and made the breach still wider. Occasionally the British inflamed matters still further by deliberately baiting the one or the other, and they fell easy victims to these subterfuges. Riots became frequent, which could only be quelled by the British troops—a great example of the necessity of Britain's rule over India! She adopted the rôle of peace-maker amongst India's "teeming millions"! But what the rioters, with their herd

instinct, failed to discover was this: how were these riots originally perpetrated?

It was a fairly easy proposition. A starving wretch of either community would, for a handful of rupees, throw the carcase of a pig into a mosque, or the bleeding head of a cow into a temple. The worshippers would rush out vowing vengeance on the entire community. Stabbing affrays would follow, and it would result in street fighting. The troops would be called out, a few shots fired, a few Indians killed and injured, and peace would be re-established. The British Government would turn a serious face towards the problem of communalism, and once more impress the world with the necessity of their presence in India.

In the meantime, the Hindu Maha-Sabha paraded behind its cloak of nationalism and condemned Muslim communalism. That might have been true, but the Maha-Sabha, in spite of its assertions, have not quite succeeded in establishing a reputation for disinterested action. When their interests clashed with any national and democratic situation, their mode of working was identical with that of Muslim organisations.

These bodies were seen to be composed of upper-class reactionaries, who were exploiting the religious fanaticism of the masses for their own end. They worked hand in glove with the Government, and were satisfied with whatever favours they received, and conciliated the masses on the ground of religion. For the latter, they neither sought nor obtained

anything. Views became narrower, and it was insidiously urged in several quarters that the ideals of the Congress were inimical to Muslim interests; but many of the Muslim leaders, who had pledged their allegiance to it, refused to forsake it.

Communalism was the one weapon left to the British Government for undermining the growing power of the Congress. It was effective while the masses were still unawakened, still unaware of their own interests, and before the message of Socialism was preached. Talks of "Muslim culture" and the rights of the "Muslim nation" were freely bruited abroad. Communally minded Hindus were not behindhand in flourishing their "culture" in their faces and believing in its ultimate triumph by majority. But how futile such talk, when the immediate necessity was action!

Not long ago, when the tension was particularly high, a dinner was organised to cement Hindu-Muslim amity, the guest of honour being Professor Syed Hossein. He had for years lived in America, carrying the message of Indian culture, preaching of the glory that had been hers, speaking of the troublous times which had fallen upon her. On his return, he found many changes for the worse, especially in his own province of Bengal. He could hardly get people to meet on a social footing without upsetting their communal equilibrium. At this dinner, where the leaders of all factions had been gathered, he spoke to them in no measured tones of their guilt towards the youth of the nation. They

had betrayed that youth, so full of enthusiasm, so ready for action, by misdirecting their energy into other channels. Instead of helping to widen their path and give them a bigger outlook, politicians, to justify their own ends, had drawn them into their own narrow ways of thought. He spoke of Swami Sraddhananda, who had been brutally murdered by the Muslims; he spoke also of Hakim Ajmal Khan to whom Gandhi, when he was imprisoned, gladly entrusted the welfare of the Congress and the Indian people. Hakim Ajmal Khan was a zealous Muslim, but he was not intolerant and bigoted, hence he enjoyed the love and trust of all communities. Max Müller had called India "the cradle of civilisation"—and both the Hindus and Muslims were heirs to it; there was no need for petty quarrels.

Communalism had had many advocates, but none so proficient as Jinnah, under whom the Muslim League found fresh inspiration. On the other hand, the Hindu Maha-Sabha rallied together a few of the upper-class Hindus, especially the creditor and banker class, and proceeded to carry on in the same implacable way. Thus communalism came down to a struggle between the vested interests of both communities and the masses. Very often, as in Bengal, Punjab, and Sind, the landlords were Hindus and the tenants poor Muslims, and friction of an economic kind was frequent, a communal aspect being provided for this. But actually there is so little difference between the sects in the heart of the villages that it is often impossible to differentiate



between the Hindu and the Muslim cultivator. They themselves are unaware of any difference, and even after speaking to them for a long time it is only after learning their names that it is possible to determine their creed. If asked, they always urge first that they are either Bengalis, Biharis or Punjabis, or to whatever province they belong, and when further questioned they reveal their faith.

During an investigation of a so-called Hindu-Muslim riot in Bihar, queer facts were revealed. It was on the occasion of some Muhammadan festival that Hindus were supposed to have proved obstructive. But, on enquiry, it was found that for centuries the two communities had lived peacefully side by side, and never had there been any friction between them. So great had been the amity that, during the Mohurram festival of the Muslims, the Hindus had helped them to build their *tazias* (miniature replicas of the tomb of the martyrs Hasan and Hussein); at the Ratha-Jatra, or Car Festival, the Muslims had done likewise in helping the Hindus to construct the chariots in which Juggernath would be carried in procession. At the time of the case under investigation, members of both communities were non-plussed and bewildered, for they could not understand how, after years of amicable feeling, they had come to be involved in strife, and were truly glad to disperse and live their lives in the same old way. This admission fell from the lips of the Government official, who had been sent to quell the riot.

These innocent people, already labouring under

a heavy load of economic trouble, lay themselves open to injurious propaganda by their own illiteracy and want of education. It is not as if they have ever benefited by any demonstrations of enmity; they are the victims of those who are struggling for a few seats in the Assembly, or those who owe their influential position to their successful fermentation of strife. In both communities it degenerates into a race for favours thrown to them by the British Government, to make its shaking foundations a trifle more secure by deliberately constricting the vision of the people, who look to them for "guidance," thus seeking to prevent the growth of a national and political outlook.

Communalism in its broadest sense should not be inimical to the cause of humanity at large. For it constitutes the interests of the community, who are not separate from the rest of the nation, but form an integral part of the nation itself. But when this is narrowed down to represent nothing but differences and follows a sectarian policy, it is then that it becomes poisonous to national vitality. Due to the constant and insidious interference of Britain to safeguard her own power, communalism has been made to develop these alarming proportions. It has been manufactured in such a shrewd manner as to assume the *problematical* aspect of a first-class problem. In reality, it is a bubble of illusion produced by all those whose interests thrive on the exploitation of the poverty and illiteracy of the masses. But as Pandit Nehru has said: "What is communalism? I have looked

at it through a microscope, and found nothing in it." There is no stable foundation for it, and, with the progress of educational reforms amongst the people themselves, it is bound to disappear. This bogey, which has been dangled before the eyes of the Indian people long enough, has had its day. Even now its powers of evil are fast vanishing, and the following is an example of how far its motive has been exploded. Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari recently said that there were two parties in the country: "The Capitalists, which consisted of the Muslim League and the Hindu Maha-Sabha; and the Congress, which included the Ahrar Party, the Jamaitu-lulema-i-Hind, and the Khudai Khitmatgars (Red Shirts). He appealed to Muslims to join the last-named party, if they wanted independence."

The Congress now by its constitution stands to represent the entire mass of the Indian people. It seeks a final solution of communal strife by means "consistent with the fundamental principles of nationalism." It also endeavours to bring about the centralisation of all problems, both political and economic, and the common bond of tolerance in all matters of religion and culture is the basis of the Congress bid for Hindu-Muslim unity. Should its programme of independence ever materialise, the minorities will benefit by its future policy just as greatly as any others. If national reconstruction is conducted on Socialistic lines, it is the "have-nots" who will benefit at the expense of the "haves," and the Indian masses have to be classified among the

"have-nots," said Subhas Bose in his presidential address at the Haripura Congress in 1937. The idea that the British Government, aided by its communalist agents, has fostered that under the Congress régime the Muslims will suffer by Hindu domination, is utterly false. For on the question of minorities, taking the instance of the "untouchables," nobody can deny that it is entirely due to the indefatigable labour of the Congress that, during the last seventeen years, a great many of their social disabilities have vanished, and the rest are fast disappearing. If this superhuman task of removing caste barriers has been made possible, tolerance and recognition of other creeds should not be difficult. How great and insurmountable are the barriers of caste prejudices only those who live under them realise. How difficult is their removal, when even those for whom one is fighting are, by their own ignorant suspicion, arrayed against their benefactors, only those who have volunteered in this service can fathom. If, in spite of hidebound orthodoxy, this has been possible in a land of unwritten laws and conventions, Hindu-Muslim strife, which is an unnatural condition, created and fostered by exterior elements, can also be wiped out through the medium of mass contact and propaganda.

At the moment of the inauguration of the New Constitution, the Communal Award was the outcome of differences between the Congress delegates and the delegates of the minorities. At the 1931 Conference in London, Mahatma Gandhi, as the

only spokesman for the Congress, was definite about the question of separate electorates *vis-à-vis* joint electorates. Gandhiji made it quite clear that on this question Hindu British India, as voiced by him, was against separate electorates. Bengal and Punjab Muslim delegates were equally insistent upon separate electorates with weightage. Europeans and the other minorities were satisfied with a small proportion of seats in the legislatures, so long as the British Government were prepared to guarantee the necessary safeguards. Throughout the Conference negotiations went on, to be shattered by the adamant attitude of Gandhi, who refused to yield. The lesser minorities agreed to support Gandhi's scheme, provided the Muslims did not oppose it. Unfortunately, until the close of the Conference no satisfactory solution could be agreed on.

At the Plenary Session the Prime Minister (Mr. MacDonald) remarked on this, and made quite clear that if, in a short time, the communities could not see their way to arriving at a solution, it would be the duty of His Majesty's Government to be the mediator, though solution from an alien source could not possibly be pleasing.

On the arrival in India of the delegates, further negotiations were resumed, resulting in the calamity of the Poona Pact. The Congress formula might have been acceptable to all the minorities, including the Muslims (*viz.* joint electorates with reservation of seats), if Gandhi at that moment had not insisted that Hindus should not be further divided into

caste and scheduled classes. The depressed class delegates could not possibly agree to Gandhi's suggestion, owing to a natural fear of caste Hindu domination.

Ultimately, all the demands of the minorities, except the question of separate electorates, were accepted at Poona, which brought about tremendous hardship for the Hindus in the two provinces of Bengal and the Punjab, where the Hindus are in a minority.

Owing to this difference, His Majesty's Government were forced to impose their own decision on the people of India, wherein the principle that the majority community should get at least 51 per cent of the seats in the legislatures was shelved, and in certain provinces the balance of power was left with the Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and special representatives.

It is, however, laid down that should at any time the communities be able to agree to a redistribution of seats acceptable to all the communities throughout the country, the Award will be amended accordingly.

The Congress declared in its election manifesto that it was absolutely opposed to it because, instead of developing freedom and unity, it tended to cause the disintegration of the Indian people and proved a great barrier to nationalism and democracy. But if this Award were to be changed, it was necessary to do so by the mutual agreement of the communities concerned. In its present state it left no prospect of freedom for the people of India, as it was only a

further means of propagating communal discord. It is impossible for the country to make any progress in its struggle against Imperialism without the good-will and co-operation of all the communities. The minorities must not consider themselves in an inferior position, for they are indispensable to the national cause, which seeks the betterment and freedom of the entire people of India. The Fundamental Rights resolution of the Congress further makes it clear that:

"There should be no interference in matters of conscience, religion or culture, and a minority is entitled to keep its personal law without any change in this respect being imposed by the majority."

The *bona fides* of the Congress has been thoroughly tested, and its Muslim membership has gone up by thousands. Those Muslim leaders, who have remained true to it through the most troublesome times, have lived to see their objective of Hindu-Muslim unity under one banner in sight.

But extraneous elements are difficult to cast out, especially when most of them are actuated by thoughts of personal gain and self-aggrandisement. It becomes still more deplorable when communal elements work hand-in-hand in a subterranean fashion to undermine the power of the Congress, which stands to represent the platform of all schools of national thought in India. The communal bodies, who are the capitalists in India, are afraid of the growing power of the proletariat under the leadership of the Congress. The former are the "haves,"

who will suffer should the latter—the “have-nots”—ever come into power, and the communal policy is the one weapon left in their hands. Their growing bitterness is a tangible proof of their fear, and they think nothing of taking advantage of their position of vantage to hurl threats in public. An illuminating example was the speech made by Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq, Premier of Bengal, at the sessions of the Muslim League at Lucknow in 1937. Under the patronage of Mr. Jinnah, he vowed to wreak vengeance upon the Hindus in his province for all the wrong done to Muslims in other provinces. Since then, under his ministry, 60 per cent of Government posts have been reserved for Muslim candidates, irrespective of competitive examinations, even though it was urged that these tests should be confined to Muslims only. Thus, in Bengal the trouble has taken on a more inflamed and aggravated form, helped also by the Hindu Maha-Sabha's intolerant attitude in the province. The disease has gone so far down and eaten so deeply into the vitals of the people that even the establishment of a Coalition Ministry, under a Congress Premier, would be of little avail at present, except perhaps that it might afford some relief to the Hindu community. But that is no solution, for the trouble must be eradicated root and branch from the lowest strata. When that is done, and an understanding reached between the people themselves, no amount of propaganda by ministers will be of any use. Once the masses attain a solidarity, irrespective of caste or creed, it will be



the death-knell of communalism. Until then, except through mass contact and anti-propaganda, Hindu-Muslim unity will remain a dream.

While the apostles of communalism take advantage of the ignorance of the masses and excite their religious fanaticism, their mode of capturing the intelligentsia is more subtle. A Muslim student, of good parentage and culture, solemnly asserted that people misunderstood those leaders who are said to be rabid communalists. Their motive of action was prompted by the fact that the Muslims have not achieved the same standard of education as the Hindus, and it is necessary to bring them to it. Until that is achieved it is necessary to follow a sectarian policy, thereafter unity is possible on an equal footing; otherwise the Muslims would always have to play a secondary rôle. This certainly captures the imagination of the educated students, and, being impressionable, they are led away by a false sense of nationalism.

The analysis of this alleged "problem" of communalism reveals one of the many facets of British rule in India. It has been to their interest to foster a spirit of segregation, both in matters of religion and provincialism. They have all along followed the same principle of divide and rule, seeking to work against India's united front. With all her armies and armaments, Britain would find it difficult to hold down 350 million people clamouring for freedom with one voice. Only a wholesale massacre of an unarmed people would be possible as retaliation.

Britain's strategy, however, has so far successfully prevented complete unity, but the future holds grave possibilities of proving the futility of such a policy. India is no longer inarticulate; she is fully alive to the needs of her people, who have also realised that in complete independence lies the only salvation. The one solution to it is unity in the face of a common enemy, and the end of exploitation by communalism and provincialism appears not far distant.

## Chapter 13

### WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

THE mass of Indian womanhood still lives in the Mediaeval Age, and nowhere has woman been so exploited as in India. Yet her background is one of freedom, in the long centuries before Christ. Even until about 300 B.C. it has been recorded that women took part freely in the social and economic life of the people; they were looked up to and respected for their talents and given adequate labour. They were employed by the State as field labourers, weavers and spinners, as nurses and in other capacities. Provision was made for those who were in more straitened circumstances than others, and fine work was encouraged by prizes and higher wages. Maternity benefits before and after confinement were prevalent, and mothers were allowed to take their work home so as not to neglect their homes and children.

This was the past—the past that is nothing but a memory now, a past that is almost unbelievable, for in the present nothing of it remains. The present is a period of repression and servitude; and the immediate past is even blacker—it represents the utter degradation of womanhood to the depths of slavery. Woman has had no say in anything in her own life; she was merely privileged to exist by clinging to man. As he ordained—whether for good

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THE mass of Indian womanhood still lives in the Mediaeval Age, and nowhere has woman been so exploited as in India. Yet her background is one of freedom, in the long centuries before Christ. Even until about 300 B.C. it has been recorded that women took part freely in the social and economic life of the people; they were looked up to and respected for their talents and given adequate labour. They were employed by the State as field labourers, weavers and spinners, as nurses and in other capacities. Provision was made for those who were in more straitened circumstances than others, and fine work was encouraged by prizes and higher wages. Maternity benefits before and after confinement were prevalent, and mothers were allowed to take their work home so as not to neglect their homes and children.

This was the past—the past that is nothing but a memory now, a past that is almost unbelievable, for in the present nothing of it remains. The present is a period of repression and servitude; and the immediate past is even blacker—it represents the utter degradation of womanhood to the depths of slavery. Woman has had no say in anything in her own life; she was merely privileged to exist by clinging to man. As he ordained—whether for good

or for evil—she had to submit; he was her god in life, a human personification of Him who was Lord of all. Absolute obedience was extorted from her, and her self-expression completely suppressed. Her existence was only in relation to the male members of the household; she had to live a life of quiet service, which was in reality one of self-immolation. Personal preferences were denied her, and her flowerlike youth was crushed under a weight of matrimonial duties, terrorised by an irascible mother-in-law. She became so submissive under the double pressure of husband and husband's mother that her very docility made her companionship unattractive for man. She was a mere cipher; any originality or attempt at self-expression was denied as unwomanly. Thus woman shrank more and more within herself, until she became little more than a glorified housekeeper.

The lot of a widow was many degrees worse, for her widowhood was reckoned as the outcome of a sin-haunted destiny. Only a life of severe asceticism could ever pave the way to a better fate in the next incarnation. She was looked upon as little better than an outcast and excluded from all social activities.

Out of all this was born the evil of prostitution, for unable to find congenial companionship at home, man sought it elsewhere. His wife was nothing more than a child-bearing machine, until all manner of internal diseases made her unfit for it; having harnessed her to her domestic duties, her life of humdrum affairs ceased to interest him, and he looked

round for amusement amongst women who had made it their profession to amuse men. Here be it made clear the wife was allowed no outside companionship, and it was incumbent upon her to lead a life of absolute chastity and purity. If a whisper of any sort reflected upon the woman, without a word of warning she was thrown out into the streets. Thus a life of repression, especially among young widows, bred desire, and the growing demand created a market for prostitution. Round these two factors rose a flourishing traffic in women and girls, which has been responsible for lowering the moral tone and vitality of the whole nation, leading to the ruthless exploitation of woman.

Progress of any description was abhorrent to man, because he was afraid that it might be the means of loosening his hold upon woman. Early marriage became the law, and the seclusion of woman a symbol of respectability—being the root cause of the *purdah* system. These were both necessary preventives of education, which gradually degenerated into illiteracy. Learning of any sort was considered unwomanly and outside the province of woman. She was slowly reduced to becoming a parasite upon man and encouraged to lead a life of sloth and idleness. This state of affairs touched only the aristocracy and the middle classes, since for the masses the struggle for a living was too grim for them to respect these restrictions. As soon, however, as any of them attained a middle-class standard they drifted into middle-class ways of living.

All these restrictions upon woman were enforced through a series of man-made laws, which passed into the religious beliefs of the people. Thus tradition and religion, combined with ignorance, put further shackles upon the woman. Though man himself progressed in many ways and took advantage of higher education, he deliberately kept woman far behind. He made his position secure by quoting from the Sanskrit texts and scriptures. Certain laws were laid down as regards her behaviour towards man, and her daily life became an epitome of this. If the question of education was ever raised, it was put down by the priests as irreconcilable with the sacred writings. Superstition and bigotry encircled the already circumscribed life of woman, and she was unable to combat the forces against her, until she became a mere cog in the machinery of a man-made social system and existed merely for his service and his pleasure. He cloaked her subserviency under protestations of his respect for womenkind, that made of her a thing apart to be kept unsullied by contact with the outside world.

This then was the semi-feudalistic state in which woman lived fifty years ago in India. The two evils of child marriage and *purdah* were man's greatest assets towards his domination. It is interesting to note that the veiling of women was unknown in India before the advent of the Moghul influence, far back in the days of Mahmoud of Ghazni in 1591. When he invaded India from Turkestan he brought with him his veiled women. This had a psychological



effect on the people of the country, who thought it wisest also to shield their own women from the eyes of strangers. With the coming of Tamerlane, Hindu women became still more recluse, and the establishment of the Moghul Empire under Baber put the finishing touch to the development of the *pardah* system. Through these innumerable foreign invasions Indian women lost their freedom, for men at first only sought to protect them from the ruthless hand of foreign hosts. But even to this day the south-west and the south-east remain free from *pardah*, for they had withstood the advancing power of the Moghuls, and *pardah* had never been imported into their lands. The subsequent conquests left the movements of their women unrestricted.

Many outside elements have penetrated India, she has served many masters, and *pardah* has become an established institution, its origin lost in the annals of time. It has been abused in more ways than one, until it has degenerated into a fetter upon the activities of women. The more aristocratic a family the more secluded their women became, until it was considered immoral for a respectable woman to appear before strange eyes. Within this constricted life, within the boundaries of the women's apartments, they became narrow-minded, superstitious, and intolerant. Their horizon was circumscribed to the extreme. They were never allowed in the street, and even when in carriages they had to have the shutters down, and the lack of fresh air brought all manner of disease—mainly tuberculosis—and in

closed atmosphere the germ had no means of extermination and the disease spread from family to family.

Child-marriages were also unknown in the early days of the Hindu rule, when there is ample proof that girls made their own choice of husbands. This system was known as *swayamvara*, wherein the parents of a marriageable girl called together all the suitors for her hand, and she was given freedom of choice. When child-marriage actually came into being is difficult to trace, but it is certain that it was existent about 400 B.C. It can be seen from various texts that the marriageable age—from Vedic times downwards—was gradually decreasing, from sixteen or eighteen years to eight years, and sometimes to three or four.

To be able to understand child-marriage it is necessary firstly to realise the Hindu ideal of matrimony, which is undertaken for the sake of the family or community. No personal preference must enter into it, for the present worldly existence is but a stage in the evolution of the soul towards the attainment of perfection. To make this easier for man and woman it was considered suitable to betroth them from childhood. In the first stages it was no more than betrothal, for husband and wife lived separately until a suitable age. But to such an extent has it degenerated as to become a menace to the lives of young girls. It has given rise to child-mothers, who grow old almost before they start to live. They lose all interest in life and fall victims to all manner of diseases to which their weakened constitutions lay

them open. Child-widows are another of the legacies of such marriages, and the greatest of all its shameful effects. For a Hindu woman can have but one husband, and there is no way out of the rigours of widowhood, even if she were a mere babe at the time of the husband's death and did not even know him. Desire of all kinds is suppressed within her, her girlhood and womanhood are nipped in the bud, and she is condemned to lead the life of an ascetic. The strictures imposed on her are in no way less than those upon older women. Her life becomes blank and hopeless; in death lies her only escape.

Out of the mystical ideals of child-marriage are born maternal and infantile mortality. These two evils have combined to make of the Indian woman a helpless, timid creature, unfit for any struggle. It has an effect of moral and physical degeneracy, for she is deprived of any social or cultural companionship. A slavish mentality and an inferiority complex become the equipment of these women, which they impart to their children. Thus it was to combat these and to redeem womanhood from its servitude that individual reformers began to arise and to give an impetus to a great awakening. Their work was made most difficult by the women themselves, who had by this time begun to hug the chains that bound them. Principal amongst these reformers was Raja Ram Mohan Ray, who, by his Unitarian explanation of Hinduism (Brahmo Samaj), did away with idolatry and exposed the evils of priestcraft. He was later supported by Keshub Chandra Sen, and both

these men and their followers suffered ostracism and the terrible antagonism of the orthodox Hindus. Thus, thrown on their own resources, they sought the material help of their women, who, in spite of age-long restrictions, filled the rôle enthusiastically, and tasted of freedom for the first time. Soon after this came the wave of Europeanised men, who developed ideas of a social life for their women as they had seen it in the West. They determined to give their wives their rightful social sphere. One of them took his wife to Government House—the first Indian woman to appear at a dinner-party there—and the various members of his family, who had also been invited, left the table rather than sit to eat with an unveiled woman of their own caste and creed. Thus suffered the pioneers for venturing to lift the pall of shame that hung over the women of the country.

Education on a moderate scale was preached, provided that it did not make the women leave the path of homely virtues. It is to the sagacity of those first educated Indian women, in preserving their home atmosphere untouched by exterior influences, that education was allowed to proceed, however feebly. Had man for a moment been made to undergo any radical changes in his home life, he would immediately have crushed all new ideas out of recognition. In this way this procedure of these women paved the way for the present emancipation. As early as 1849 the Elphinstone College in Bombay opened a school for girls, where the boys themselves

taught the girls, and started a magazine to interest the older women. Wherever the Brahmo element existed, women's organisations, however small and ineffectual, cropped up; these were encouraged and fostered by their men, who worked hard for the women's emancipation. There was no change in their mode of living, in their diet or dress, but the mental outlook was undergoing a metamorphosis.

About this time came another agitation, rocking the foundations of priest-ridden Hinduism. This was the question of widow remarriage, and it raised the virulent opposition of orthodox quarters. But powerful reformers, such as Vidyasagar and Ranade, were not thus to be intimidated. In their determination to lighten the unhappy lot of women they were not to be baulked in any way. A vigorous campaign followed, and it is significant of the spirit of a new age. In 1856 the Widow Remarriage Act came into existence, and reformers opened a Widow Remarriage Bureau. But convention and tradition are very real in Indian life, and there were only isolated cases of people who took advantage of the Act. It was more often the man who lacked the courage to marry a widow for fear of public ridicule and opprobrium. Though in the beginning few people availed themselves of the Act, yet it brought a measure of relief to the widows and placed a substantial weapon in their hands, liberating them from the compulsion of perpetual widowhood. Women, who had understood the crying need of their sisters, went from house to house doing campaign work

and explaining to them their own disabilities and defects. In this drive for the spread of education and enlightenment, Pandita Ramabai (originally from Bengal) was a prime mover. She argued with Sanskrit scholars and priests, quoting texts against hindering the advancement of women. They gave her due honour for her learning and conferred upon her titles hitherto reserved only for the male. Finally, she founded a home and school for widows, and courted disfavour and displeasure from all sides. Herself a widow she had the cause of widows nearest her heart, and she had the satisfaction of seeing this institution develop into real service to humanity.

Another woman of those days who devoted herself to the same cause, but with a view to making these widows self-supporting, was Ramabai Ranade. She founded an industrial home in Poona, which is to-day a great organisation under the guidance of capable women, serving an economic purpose and fulfilling a very real need in the difficulties of life to-day. Long before the unofficial visiting of prisons was even thought of she used to visit Hindu women in gaol, and read to them such books as they would understand and appreciate.

Careers for women were inconceivable, and marriage was looked upon as the one destiny for girl children. But individual cases of open rebellion against convention were a sign of the changing times. Dr. Rukmabai's was such a case. She had been a victim of child-marriage, but when the time came she refused to go to her husband, preferring an

independent career of medicine. Her family stood aghast at what was considered an uncalled for impertinence, but the girl steadfastly refused. All manner of pressure failed to move her, and eventually she carved out for herself the career she longed for and became the first Indian woman doctor.

Individual women achieved some measure of freedom, but as a mass, women fifty years ago were still in the chattel condition. Awakening there had been, and education was slowly but surely creeping in, but there was very little appreciable change anywhere. Constant motherhood had left them with little interest in life, and they could lavish neither physical nor mental care upon their children. Nevertheless, girls' schools began to appear, and the idea of education being unwomanly for girls was disappearing. It was the men who, during these years, were helping their women to find a sphere for themselves. A career for girls began to take shape as a necessary evil, but invariably the hall-mark of respectability suffered in these cases. Nursing as a profession for solitary women came as a boon to the lower middle class, but the treatment meted out to nurses by the upper orthodox classes was inhuman to the last degree. They were held as little better than the domestic in the house and treated as outcasts. Nevertheless, the crying need for an economic solution gave the profession an impetus.

Women teachers were held in greater esteem, but were nevertheless looked upon with pity. Any kind of labour for woman was considered degrading by

the women who were incapable of it themselves. Their persecution of their sisters was worse than that of the men, though naturally they were encouraged in this way by their male relatives, who were growing fearful of woman's revolt. But it was a tide difficult to stem, for primary education for girls had given place to higher and collegiate education, and by 1886 arts colleges were established throughout India. The first Indian woman took her degree from Calcutta in 1883. Literature was also finding many votaries, especially in Bengal; and the first woman's magazine was started in 1883. Though it was edited by a man, the contributors were women, and it found its way even into the most orthodox homes. Education and the taste of new-found freedom were loosening the bonds imposed by *pardah* and other social strictures. It is strange to relate that the suffragette movement, as understood in the West, found no response in India, where women were in greater bondage than those of any other country. Every step of the emancipation which is now in evidence all over India was achieved by the individual efforts of outstanding personalities, and not by mass organisation.

The advent of nationalism into the lives of the people gave a further impetus to the freedom of women. Men as well as women began to realise that man alone cannot proceed very far, and a sense of comradeship began to spring up. It was fully recognised that the advancement of women was irretrievably bound up with the salvation of the country.



Therefore political consciousness brought to women a sense of their rights and their heritage of citizenship. This was the embryo of what became the movement for the enfranchisement of women in India. In 1917, when Mr. Montagu was framing the first reforms for India, prominent Indian women brought before him their claims in the government of the country, detailing the various reforms they were anxious to carry out. But their hopes were not to be realised so easily, and this was made clear by the publication of the Chelmsford-Montagu Reforms. The agitation was forcefully carried on again in 1918, when the Southborough Franchise Committee came to India, but once more the efforts of women leaders came to naught. The Committee decided that the social conditions of the women made the franchise impossible for them. They thought the enfranchisement of women would be "out of harmony with the conservative feeling in India." This was quite a false estimate, for when the question was left to the provincial governments, in a very short time female franchise was granted. It is Madras that holds the distinction of first giving women the vote, in 1921. Soon after this women were allowed to stand for election to the Councils. Only a very limited number were able to avail themselves of this on account of the high property and educational qualifications required. Most women did not possess property in their own rights, and very few were graduates of seven years' standing. Thus, throughout India there were barely one million women who

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obtained the franchise. Nevertheless, the recognition of women's rights served as a great incentive to the progress of women. But the agitation was continued for other qualifications for the right to vote, and "wifehood" was recommended by the Lothian Franchise Committee as an additional qualification. Women universally opposed this, for it put a premium upon marriage and seemed to stress the dependency of woman upon man. Nevertheless, in spite of dissatisfaction, and however inadequate the qualifications might be, the number of enfranchised women went up to six millions. Under the new Constitution of 1935, women have been given the right to stand for election together with men, but in many places seats for women have been reserved, which practice is injurious to the self-confidence of women. This segregation is pampering, and it is, if anything, a deterrent to their independence, for they have proved themselves quite capable of standing for election against men candidates. As a result, we have to-day a woman minister, women parliamentary secretaries, and women in all the assemblies. Though the seats for women are most disproportionate to their numerical strength, nevertheless they have attained a greater significance under the New Constitution.

The legal disabilities of the Hindu woman are such that she has no right to any property either on her own or her husband's side, except what is willed to her. She can claim maintenance, but this is usually a bare pittance. As her rightful inheritance she can

lay claim to nothing, but what is known as *Stridhan* is absolutely hers, and not even her husband can lay hand on it. *Stridhan*, according to *Manu*, is of six kinds: (1) Gifts made before the nuptial fire. (2) Gifts made while the bride is being led from the residence of her parents to that of her husband. (3) Gifts made in token of love, and those made at the time of her making obeisance at the feet of elders. (4) Gifts made by her father. (5) Gifts made by her mother. (6) Gifts made by her brother. Therefore it can be seen that a Hindu woman gets only what is given to her; she has no rights over anything. In the light of present-day affairs, this condition is naturally not acceptable to women, and through their representatives in the Councils they are agitating for an amendment of the laws. They compare most unfavourably with the Muhammadan law, which confers almost equal rights of inheritance upon sons and daughters. To protect even their slender rights Hindu women were once put to great difficulties by virtue of the *purdah*. They could take legal advice only through their men, for they would not appear before lawyers. Also their own ignorance was a great disadvantage, and it made them easy victims of unscrupulous persons. But now with the appearance of women lawyers, whom they can easily consult themselves, and their own better intellectual equipment, women are realising more than ever their own rights and disabilities.

It is always the people themselves who feel for the exploitation of their weaker brethren, and there-

fore it is only natural that women should be foremost in taking up the question of the immoral traffic in women and children. As can be seen, it had its origin in the degeneracy of social customs, which brought woman down to the level of an animal, preserved for man's pleasure. Thus, as soon as she was able to get her bearings in her new-found independence it was not surprising that this question should be made of national importance. The vastness of this problem has an international bearing, but it touches India more vitally. The greatest contributing factor to it is poverty, for this trade would not exist if it were not prompted by great hunger. Want of food has a ravaging effect, and unfortunate, illiterate women fall easy victims to procurers. They are lured by promises of at least enough to eat, and are easily exploited by those who carry on the trade. In India, however, the cause is not always economic, but very often a degenerate part of ritual, as in the case of temple girls. They usually come from a good class and well-to-do parentage, who are victims of a bad tradition without realising the significance of it. Then there is also the usual Indian outlook upon girls, who are considered a liability upon their parents; and the exclusion of women from the economic life of the nation. If a woman could be given employment, and interest and care in her future exhibited, very few would fall victims to these traders. The best-known way of carrying on this traffic in women and children is by opening widows' homes and homes for unmarried mothers and other

similar institutions for women. The high-sounding names of the committee are the credentials of these pseudo-societies, but more often the names are fictitious or those of the moving spirits of the trade. Young widows and wives, finding life unbearable under the tyranny of the mother-in-law, fly to these homes for refuge. They have some vague ideas of working out their future from this "haven," but very soon are put in the way of prostitution. As long as women are not educated enough to be independent in every way, this evil is bound to exist.

Legislation of sorts exists, but it is most inadequate to meet the exigencies of the case. Abolition of brothels is only possible if counter-institutions for the employment of these women are established. Redress must come from the State, by furnishing adequate protection and opportunities for female labour. At present the entire work of social service is left to independent bodies, who render voluntary service. But their powers are limited and can only embrace a small portion of a vast number. The excellence of the attempt becomes ineffectual unless carried on in a large scale. Women, who know what education and economic training can achieve, are striving to impart a technical training to such of these unfortunates as they have been able to rescue. But it is a difficult work, unless sustained by the State. Social regeneration is only possible under a reconstruction of the present basic principles of society and government. The whole treatment has to be tackled from a different angle and visualised

as an effort at restoring the rights of those who have been hitherto robbed. But this is possible only with economic adjustments and careers for all. Destitute and solitary women, instead of being thrown to these human hyenas and made to lead a life of shame, could be transformed into true citizens.

With the rise of industrial capitalism and the establishment of factories, female labour also began to be used. Women were paid much less than the men, and the conditions under which they worked were just as severe. No special consideration was shown to them with regard to maternity benefits, etc. Whatever provision has been made by legislation in the matter of female labour does not provide against overwork. Climatic conditions are ignored, and no notice taken of the fact that labour under certain weather conditions is criminal exploitation. Both men and women suffer under these strains.

Women are at present employed in factories, in mines, and on the plantations. Factory life has its attraction in the wages, for it means greater comfort at home. But it also spells disruption of family life and the neglect of children. While it is necessary that women should be permitted to take advantage of such work as there is within their reach, it is equally essential that adequate care must be given to children. There are no crèches or nursery schools attached to the average factory or mill, so the working mother is torn between her home and her work. Necessity drives her to find employment, and many a tragedy occurs at home during her absence.



A woman, who was employed as a mason's assistant, used to put her child of two into an empty cemented receptacle for collecting water. She used it as a play pen while she was away, to prevent the child getting into mischief. One evening when she opened the door of her hovel she found the receptacle full and her child drowned. Evidently he had succeeded in opening the tap and had caused his own death. These incidents are of common occurrence, and show that no thought is given to the woman who has a dual responsibility—at home and at work—upon her. Economic stress is such that she is compelled to find work or starve, but her difficulties are rarely recognised by the employer. The greatest number of women in factories are to be found in Bengal and Bombay, but everywhere, instead of female labour increasing, it is steadily decreasing. There are many causes that contribute to this, but not because women are not willing to work. Their daily bread is of too grave an importance for them to shirk work. But the general trade depression has a great deal to do with it, and also because men are given preference owing to their ability to work under all conditions. For instance, women are forbidden in night shifts.

Of recent years a great outcry has been raised against the employment of women in mines. The work is considered too dangerous and the conditions asphyxiating, both mentally and physically. As a result, they are being gradually eliminated from mining centres. While it is true that the rigours of

underground work are most injurious to women's health, and that they have to live in hovels really unfit for human habitation, where not even daylight filters in, it must also be apparent that it is not fair to deprive them of jobs with nothing to offer in exchange. The conditions under which they live are admittedly abominable, but they must be able to keep body and soul together, to appreciate the improvement in their surroundings. Otherwise home life will be broken up, for they will have to live away from their husbands who work in the mines. Living however huddled up together they might be, they were able to subsist somehow. In this way the woman will be left behind in the village, and the man's slender income will not be enough for the two households. Either of two remedies is possible—an effort to make underground work less harmful by improving the conditions through modern appliances, or alternative employment for these women who have been sent away from the mines. Mere elimination from mining work will only increase their troubles. A remedy must be at hand to help them better their economic lot.

Female labour on the plantations—of which the most important is tea—constitutes about 45 per cent of the workers. But their surroundings are more congenial, for usually whole families are employed, and thus a home life is preserved. Individual workers are rare, and therefore the women have no outside worries to interfere with their duties. Originally they suffered much at the time of recruitment and there-

after, and grave abuses existed for which plantation life for women was dreaded. But to a large extent these have now vanished, and on the whole these women are much better off than their sister workers of factories and mines.

Woman as wage-earner is becoming more and more a necessity as economic distress grows. Those of the lower classes have never been hampered by any social scruples or false pride; the question of bread has been too acute for them. Their needs have been exploited to a large extent and they have been the victims of inadequate wages and bad housing. In the face of all this they have struggled through many obstacles. But it is the middle classes, with their false pride and prejudices, who are now being affected the most. Their women are not educated enough to take up skilled labour, and they are physically unfit, as well as too proud, to take up unskilled labour. Their housing is no better from a health point of view than the labourer's, and equally injurious to building up the physique and vitality of their children. India's men and women are too well aware now of the necessity of careers for women, but do not know which way to turn. The fear of society and its indictment sits heavy on the people, and convention rules their daily lives. Thus, woman's destiny becomes a vicious circle, until she revolts against it. This revolt strengthens each day, fostered by growing education, which is helping her to understand her own disabilities. Unfortunately for Indian women, labour has not yet attained the dig-

nity it has in the West, and a false sense of respectability still lingers round certain professions and not round others. Teaching is held most in esteem, and has been overdone to the extent of becoming the most ill-paid and inefficient profession. Conditions, too, are not adapted to suit female labour; it is not that they wish for special considerations, but humane treatment is expected. Nevertheless, in spite of inadequate wages and dearth of benefits, Indian women have worked themselves into most spheres of employment. They are to be found in industry, in politics, in the professions of law, medicine, teaching, and in sport.

Social service, which is a vital necessity in every country, is in India in the hands of society women and mushroom societies run by individuals. Thus, it has become a mere social engagement for women whose time hangs heavy on their hands. There are none who have specialised in the intricacies of this service, and all the work is performed by volunteers without real knowledge. The spirit is most admirable and certain results have been achieved, but these are all individual efforts. Collectively, these women, with their veneer of Western culture, are most ineffective and full of narrow-minded prejudices and class distinctions. There is a terrible want of co-operation; society ladies know only how to pass resolutions, but have no idea of their translation into facts. The root of the matter lies in the fact that most of them are obsessed with ideas of personal aggrandisement, and not imbued with real feelings

for their fellow women. It is those people, with whom such women do not "mix socially," who are the real workers. They find the labour they seek within the Congress, in which there are no differences of caste, creed, or sex. Service is accepted from one and all, for it is then a matter of great importance, not a mere social engagement.

As a prohibition of child-marriage the Sarda Bill was introduced, and after years of propaganda and agitation the age of consent was raised to fourteen years, making all persons liable to a fine for violating this law. The punishments were so nominal that the ruling was disregarded with impunity. When it recently came up before the Councils for the tightening up so as to leave no loopholes for offenders, the amendment was thrown out because of orthodoxy and conservatism.

Some achievements of Indian women are:

Pandita Ramabai's *Widows' Home*.

Ramabai Ranade's *Industrial Home of Service* in Poona.

*The Women's University* in Poona, founded by a mere clerk earning Rs. 20 a month. The only organisation of its kind in India, it grew out of a widows' home where there were only five boarders at first.

*The Lady Hardinge College* in Delhi, for training lady doctors and nurses, managed entirely by women.

*The Gokhale Memorial Girls' School* at Calcutta,

founded by Mrs. P. K. Ray, a leading woman educationist.

*The Bani Bhaban*, or Widows' Home, founded in Calcutta by Lady Bose, wife of the eminent scientist, the late Sir J. C. Bose.

*The Children's Fresh Air and Excursion Society* in Calcutta, organised primarily by Mrs. H. Mitra, in order to provide holiday camps for the children of the middle-class poor.

Indian women are also to be found as municipal councillors and honorary magistrates.

The question has often arisen: whether the women of India? It has often been argued that Indian women's desire for greater freedom has grown with their Westernisation, and that such an education has had its evil effects in unwomanly habits. But this is untrue, for while woman's emancipation in India has received its inspiration from the West, it is by their own efforts that they have achieved as much as they have. It is the result of an awakening after a long spell of lethargy. Even reactionary forces will now not be able to hold them back. The lesson which the women of Turkey and Iraq have taught the women of India has not been without its meaning. It has brought poignantly home to all that the progress of a country does not depend only on one class or section; it is necessary to take every step together, irrespective of caste, creed, or sex. This manifestation has grown with the daily increase in political consciousness and national duty throughout

the land. During the last few years the outstanding activities of women have been mainly in the field of politics. But this has also created an impetus for independent careers amongst them. Whatever else the New Constitution has not done, it has afforded many opportunities to women. A survey of the main provinces will show exactly what manner of work they are accomplishing.

The women of the Nehru family have contributed in a great measure to the cause of nationalism, and struggled with their menfolk during the most arduous days. It was befitting, therefore, that, with the establishment of a Congress Ministry in the United Provinces, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit should be given a position of honour in it. Beautiful and cultured, Mrs. Pandit is a sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, and was elected Minister for Health and Local Self-Government. She has applied herself to her work with the earnestness that characterises any member of her family and has taken up her duties very seriously. At a recent meeting in Cawnpore she faced a crowd of militant workers on strike, in as angry and riotous a mood as is only possible in such a gathering. But entirely without fear and alone, Mrs. Pandit spoke to them very firmly, but sympathetically nevertheless. It was a gallant gesture of trust in them, and they showed their appreciation by dispersing quietly. During a cholera epidemic in the United Provinces, she visited every infected area to see for herself the reasons for the outbreak. She arranged for the treatment of patients, as well

as making prophylactic arrangements to prevent further spread of the disease. Throughout her tours she shows a quiet efficiency and an intelligent interest in all the problems laid before her. Maybe there are a great many matters in which she is unable immediately to introduce reforms, but she strives for them nevertheless. As energetic and tireless as her brother, she accompanied him in his tours in the Garhwal hill tracts.

One of the three women who attended the Round Table Conferences was Mrs. Subbarayan, who has recently been appointed a member of the Central Assembly. She is the first Indian woman to enjoy this position. She comes from the province of Madras, a province that has many "firsts," with regard to women, to its credit. It was in Madras where women first had the right to vote; it was in Madras also that women were first appointed as Honorary Magistrates and to Municipal Councils. Though extremely orthodox from a religious point of view, the women of Madras have never been hampered by the *purdah*. They have led free lives, and it is no wonder that South Indian woman have made such great strides in emancipation. Though comparatively new to her job, Mrs. Subbarayan has not been idle. She has brought forward a Bill to restrain polygamous marriages among Hindus. It will bring relief to many long-suffering women who are discarded by their husbands on taking another wife, while they are not at liberty to take any action against them. The main items in this Act provide



equal protection for man and woman, both financially and morally. Hitherto a Hindu wife has been very much in the chattel class, but such an Act seeks to recognise her rights as an individual. Side by side with it are the various laws and amendments for divorce that are being drafted in the provincial assemblies and sponsored by women. It is a mark of a great awakening amongst them that, in spite of repeated defeats, they are creating a stir in the public opinion in these matters. Such a divorce Bill was rejected by the Punjab Assembly, but came up again in another form in the Central Provinces. Women are realising more and more every day that it is only they who can strive for their own rights and secure them in the face of opposition.

Begum Shah Nawaz is well known all over the world for her charm and diplomatic qualities. She takes the lead in most of the women's movements in the Punjab, and is the present Parliamentary Secretary of that Assembly. Though she is not a holder of Congress views, her contributions to the cause of Muslim women have been manifold. A woman with a tremendous personality, she herself discarded the *pardah* at a very early age. From that time, helped by her father, Sir Muhammad Shafi, she took a prominent part in preaching against the *pardah*. It was a very difficult task, for the women for whom she worked were her greatest hindrance. They looked upon her with suspicion, and later as a crank, but she continued her career undeterred and finally won for herself the respect and confidence

of men and women alike. Many have labelled her as "communal," as the "paid-parrot of Bonar Law," as a "hanger-on" of British Imperialism; but can anyone doubt that it is she and only she who has given a status to Muslim women? She has been their guide and inspiration, and as such deserves every tribute. In the cause of womanhood she has worked night and day; she has brought education to the homes of *pardah* women; she has laboured for their liberty and freedom of action. As the President of the All-India Muslim Women's Conference, she has brought them to realise the necessity of united action. If only such a woman could wield her powers to eradicate communalism, she would do the greatest service to the country. It cannot be that a woman of her intelligence and integrity does not realise the necessity of it; there must be some other motive that allies her to the Muslim League. But can it not be a conscripted vision? So long has she concentrated on the backwardness of Muslim women, she has perhaps forgotten that one is firstly an Indian, and only afterwards a Hindu or a Muslim!

The urge for careers and the desire for economic independence amongst women is in evidence all over India to-day. But it started quite a long time ago, when women took to law or medicine. There were isolated cases in the past, but they are now becoming more or less universal.

Bombay has a great many lady barristers of the modern generation, who are given as many facilities as the men themselves. Prominent lawyers engage

them as juniors and no difference is made amongst those of the same profession. One of these, Miss Batliwalla, took a post in the Gwalior State as legal adviser, and later acted as secretary to Jawaharlal Nehru during his last European tour.

Medicine is, of course, much more popular and the number of women in the medical profession is far greater than in the legal. Two of the most prominent personalities came from South India—Mrs. Mulhuluxmi Reddi and Mrs. Poonen Lukhose. The latter has been appointed Surgeon-General of Travancore State, and she is the first and only woman to be given such a position. For twenty years she has acted as Superintendent of the Women's Hospital there.

If women have been given chances and opportunities, they have also shown by their efficiency that they have merited such considerations as have been extended to them. Though education in franchise leaves much to be desired, nevertheless the crowd of women voters at election time is an eye-opener to most people. They come from far villages to the polling centre. Women's movements and organisations are very much alive and alert, and the achievements of individuals but reveal the progress that women as a body are making in India to-day.

## Chapter 14

# THE PEASANT MOVEMENT

WITH her seven hundred thousand villages and an overwhelming majority "living" upon the land, India's peasantry may be regarded as one of her vital problems. They constitute the mainspring of strength in the colossal fight that India is making for her liberty, and, as such, their mass awakening has been only of fairly recent development. It is during the last few years that the peasantry has been stirred out of its mental stagnation and marshalled into well-disciplined bodies to reinforce the strength of the Congress—the only representative of national aspirations and independence.

Retrospection is necessary if one would understand the existing plight of the peasantry. Its condition, verging on destitution, represents the most glaring instance of capitalist exploitation. Since the advent of Great Britain, India has become her greatest supplier of raw materials and the biggest market for her own products. Indigenous industries and agriculture maintained their balance until about the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the rigid industrial developments in Britain found in India a treasure-house for the exploitation of her natural resources. To supply the industrial centres of Britain with raw materials, and keep alive her own as well, was not possible. Therefore the native

industries were destroyed to serve the ends of the masters. India became a mere feeder of Great Britain. There was naturally a rapid decay of indigenous textile industry, metalwork, shipbuilding, and other industries. Customs duties were much less on goods imported into India than on those exported to Britain. Thus, India's trade was mercilessly sacrificed to the interests of the British traders. A minor example of customs restriction is that of a ton of Indian iron imported into Great Britain, on which is paid a duty of five shillings, while English iron imported into India pays no duty at all. Shipbuilding was strangled very early. During 1795, ninety-six ships of 4,105 tons were being built in Calcutta; by 1840 the industry was dead. The economic policy of British Imperialism has been to exploit the agriculture of this country for the securing of raw materials for British manufacturers, and this has led to the deliberate destruction of India's industrial capacities; so much so that 70 per cent of her population is forced to live on the land, for most of the workers of the vanished industries have had to fall back upon agriculture.

Peasants who had always worked for their own needs, and who raised such products as were a necessity to them, were ruthlessly exploited to produce crops of a commercial character. It is true that there was a greater value for these, but it was all in the hands of capitalists and middlemen, who thought nothing of denuding the peasants of even their bare necessities. To further the interests of Imperialism,

India has been made an integral part of world capitalism, and has been made to shoulder a large portion of Great Britain's burden in the world crisis, which was the result of over-production everywhere. There has been a fall in the prices of her agricultural products, thus increasing the economic distress of the Indian peasantry and impoverishing them still further. During over a century of British rule the people have been driven to the land, having been robbed of any other source of living, and subjected to exploitation by force of their poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance. Most of those who had to quit their trades owing to the destruction of home industries were men with little or no capital, who had for centuries been following the calling of their fathers. Therefore, they could not afford to buy land when there was nothing but agriculture left to them, and they became "landless labourers." These people have no holdings of their own, but have to work for *zemindars* with not even adequate compensation. So rapid has been the impoverishment of the peasantry that the number of "landless labourers" is continually increasing.

The land has been split up to such an extent into minute holdings that it has had a terrible effect on agriculture. Even these holdings are subdivided into plots, due to lack of capital to maintain the whole section, and, as a result, large-scale agriculture has been made impossible. The ill-effects of this subdivision is manifold, for as a rule small farmers own the plots, and they have no capital wherewith to

take advantage of the potentialities of the land. Very often it is impossible for the peasants to keep cattle, for adequate pasture is wanting. They have to hire cattle when necessary for ploughing, and those who cannot afford that go back to the spade. These miserable plots lead to innumerable complications, not excluding litigation over boundary lines; and as they have such a small margin of profit, a bad harvest spells complete disaster.

The poverty of the peasants has been such that for years they have been just as near starvation as it is possible for living, working people to be. They do not get even enough for the bare necessities of life. Within the last seventy-five years their financial condition has been steadily deteriorating, until now it is very often only one out of three persons in each family that can get his full quota of food, and instead of this they cut out every third meal necessary for each person. This practice is so injurious to their health that they are physically incapable of producing even sufficient for their own needs. There is a constant drainage of vitality from want of nourishment, and they are laid open to insidious diseases. Their actual food is of the lowest nutritional value, and it is primarily made up of rice or millet; even pulse is a luxury. The only vegetables they can afford are onions, turnips, and sometimes spinach that grows wild in the country. Even at festivals and weddings there is little change, for they have not the means for it. Quite as often they have only one garment to their backs, and even in the case of

epidemic or contagious disease a change of clothes is quite impossible. In a report of the Health Department of the Government of Bengal it is written that: "The present peasantry of Bengal are in a very large proportion taking to a dietary on which even rats could not live for more than five weeks." Their vitality is at such a low ebb that they fall easy victims to every disease—cholera, malaria, tuberculosis and enteric, while infantile and maternal mortality is exceptionally high, due to bad and injurious diet. As the average length of life of an Indian to-day is twenty-three, the entire peasantry is in such an ill-nourished and underfed condition that there is a total collapse in the face of epidemic or famine.

All this is the outcome of undue pressure upon the land, making efficient and prosperous agriculture impossible. The cultivators are more dead than alive, riddled with diseases to which want of proper nourishment has made them susceptible. The pressure is worsened by want of proper irrigation where land is fertile but water is scarce. It has not been in the interests of Britain to increase the agricultural potentialities of the land, except for commercial crops for her industrial centres. The peasants have therefore sunk lower, and their own illiteracy and ignorance, also products of this oppression, have only worsened the problem. In some places they are little more than serfs, and have to serve the *zemindars* as long as they live. They are given no wages, but get food and clothing from them. They are the



hereditary servants of their masters, maintained on the estate, and they cannot resign for more lucrative service elsewhere.

A terrible factor in the further impoverishment of the peasant is his being constantly in the grip of the moneylender. This has arisen out of the fact that when small industrialists, who, on the suppression of their trade, had to face destitution, turned to agriculture, their own resources were negligible, and thus they had to resort to usurers to enable them to get a start once more in life. This has grown to an alarming extent because of the heavy taxation and land revenues exacted from the peasantry. In Bihar and Orissa the total rural indebtedness is 155 crores of rupees (nearly 120 million pounds), and nowhere is it less than 60 lakhs (£450,000), while, on an average per province, it is about 100 crores. It has been estimated that the total rural indebtedness of India is 1,600 crores of rupees (nearly 1,150 million pounds). This burden of debt has been rapidly increasing with the years, and statistics show that it has arrived at this figure within seven years, from 1929 to 1936. The main cause of this speedy increase has been due to the world crisis, which had a devastating effect on Indian agriculture. Thus, though the incomes of the peasants became much less, and the price of raw materials fell enormously, there was no relief from taxation or remission of rents. Unable to pay rent, forced into law courts by the *zemindars*, there was no other option for the peasants but to borrow money. Their exceptionally

low earnings are insufficient to meet their own needs, and more often their entire income is annexed by the revenue officers and the *zemindars* for payment of taxes and rents. Thus once more the peasant has to turn to the usurer, and live on loans from year to year at exorbitant rates of interest. Finally, it ends in his complete destitution and ejection from the land. As the Indian peasantry is placed to-day, over 80 per cent of them can never afford to pay back their debts and will never be able to work themselves out of the clutches of the moneylenders.

A poignant source of oppression of the peasantry is in the *Zemindari* system, or landlordism. This semi-feudal state of affairs was created by the British on the inauguration of their rule in India, with a view to entrenching themselves behind a wall of Indian support created by themselves. With this idea rent-farmers and collectors, as had existed in the days of the Moghuls, were transformed into landholders with hereditary rights over the estates. These creatures of Imperialistic policy, with the support of the Government behind them, constitute the gravest menace to rural uplift in every form. The viciousness of their practices is difficult to imagine, and the peasants are too feeble to combat them in any way. There is no way to prevent their exploitation, and millions of peasants have sunk into slavery and are unable to retaliate. Government levies heavy rents on the *zemindars*, who in turn extort them from their tenants by means of heavy taxation. There is no limit to their exactions; in the United

Provinces, for instance, the tenants are expected to contribute towards the upkeep of the landlord's motor car or elephants. In spite of Tenancy Laws, which the *zemindars* disregard with impunity, rack-renting is very prevalent throughout the country.

The landlords are debauched to such an extent that even the women of the peasantry are not free from their persecutions. Only a few months ago a case in Orissa was given publicity, in which a *zemindar* had been accused of buying a girl from amongst his tenantry. The Raja of Aul (Orissa) purchased for Rs. 500 (£40) a thirteen-year-old girl from amongst his tenants, with a view to making her his concubine. If the father of the girl can be blamed for his cupidity, he can also be pardoned because of his extreme poverty. Five hundred rupees is a fortune to a man whose yearly income, perhaps, is less than twenty rupees. By sacrificing one child he would be able to save the rest of his large family from distress. But what of the man who can take advantage of this position to satisfy his desires? The girl died within a month, and whilst the true cause of her death was kept secret, it was given out as dropsy. The Raja considered himself safe, for who would take up the cause of a poor peasant girl?

But in this he was mistaken, for some young men of her own caste, aided by a lawyer from Patna, determined to bring this inhuman deed to justice. In the district courts they were defeated, the magistrate being too scared of the powerful Raja to see the rights of the case. Furthermore, these benefactors

of the deceased girl were sued for defamation by the Raja's men, and damages were awarded against them.

They appealed, however, to the High Court at Patna, where their appeal was allowed. The late Sir Courteney Terrell, the Chief Justice of Bihar, in his judgment, issued a severe indictment of the Raja, the presiding magistrate, and the police. He described the magistrate as "incompetent," which is in itself a grievous slur on a responsible officer. With reference to the Raja and the police officers handling investigation, he said: "If it had been placed in the hands of a police officer with a better regard for duty, no doubt the Raja would have been made to answer for the death of the girl. He should have been put on trial, and his activities should have been brought to a satisfactory termination. . . . I desire to say with all the emphasis at my command that in the case of such an accusation against a person like the Raja of Aul, the investigation should have been undertaken by a thoroughly trustworthy police officer, and it should never have been left to the individuals who undertook it. In this matter the higher police authorities neglected their obvious duty. It was as necessary to prevent the Raja from being blackmailed as it was to prevent the bribery of the police by the Raja, and either possibility is too notorious to be ignored."

This is not an isolated instance; it is of common occurrence in India, and it is only lately that such cases are being brought to light and given the

publicity they deserve. But so long as the iniquitous system of *zemindars* exists, oppression will continue unabated, as it is not to the interest of the British Government to interfere, for these landlords constitute their bulwark of Indian support.

These are but the barest facts. The condition of the peasant does not bear analysis, for it would be difficult to reconcile it with the prosperity of the landlords or the income of the Government. But it is sufficient to say that the Indian peasantry to-day is in a much worse condition than the Russian peasantry under the Tsars. This is a severe charge against the efficacy of British rule in India, which has led to the utter impoverishment of 75 per cent of the inhabitants and has done nothing to relieve their suffering.

But out of this, awakening was bound to follow, for, while the whole country is undergoing a political upheaval and waking up to national consciousness, it was hardly likely that the peasants should be ignored in the scheme of things. Their own ignorance, fear, and illiteracy were their greatest enemies, but under the influence of the nationalists they have been made to realise that they are an integral part of the nation, and that without them India cannot proceed towards independence. It was a most difficult task to make them realise that there were those who would free them from their thralldom, to whom they were necessary. For so many years they had looked upon themselves as only open to exploitation that the idea of service for them and from

obdurate in their demands for the cancellation of the increase or a proper enquiry into the matter. The poor people were unmercifully threatened; on one occasion an official asked one of them to pay up, because it was after all only a "slight enhancement," to which the peasant replied: "How can we afford even that? We make our gruel of cornmeal boiled in ten times as much water, and live on it. You grudge us even that!"

So great a stir had this situation created by then that Collectors were recalled from their seaside holidays, Commissioners from their camps up in the pleasant hills, and local officials rallied together to fight the growing power of the peasantry. The Collector came to camp at Bardoli, and was greeted with closed doors on all sides; even taxis were not available, for the passive resisters had commandeered the whole lot. Several drivers had their licences confiscated for refusing to drive the Collector to his destination. Then he formulated a plan of harassing the tenants by attaching their buffaloes, and a Muslim officer was appointed to supervise, who would also be able to cause friction between the two communities.

This was the signal for unprecedented marauding by the Government servants, aided by Pathan toughs imported from other provinces. It reflects well upon the solidarity of the people in Bardoli that none of the recruits for this work were obtained locally. Women also participated in this agitation, and in the face of dire distress put up a stout resistance.

Raids for the attachment of buffaloes led to untold misuse of power, even annexing by force those belonging to people who had not a vestige of property, and hence no rent to pay. It appeared that the liability extended to everybody in the district jointly and severally. It was a sore trial for the people to see their beloved animals, as dear to their hearts as their own children, being maltreated and dying for want of fodder and water. Muslims and Hindus were alike subjected to ill-use by the officials.

Through everything the unity of the people remained unbroken. They had known that this must follow if they were to be loyal to their principles. Meek, mild and poorer though they were, they showed a quiet dignity of spirit which seems to be the heritage of all passive resisters. Government's next offensive was the forfeiture of valuable land, and gaol for the principal promoters of this agitation. House-breaking was of daily occurrence, and assaults and seizure of property, irrespective of ownership. But the situation was at that time definitely getting beyond the officials. They were circumvented in every way, and were even getting suspicious of their own hirelings. The attention of all India had been attracted, and the case threatened to become of world importance. Everything had gone contrary to official expectations, compulsion had failed, everywhere they had been repulsed. Sympathy for the sufferers was immense outside Bardoli, and there was a great public awakening. The terrible fight

these poor peasants were putting up was an eye-opener in all quarters, and a conference between Sardar Patel and the Viceroy resulted.

As is usual with these negotiations, there was no satisfactory issue and the deadlock continued. The authorities were not willing to yield on any point, and the people were equally determined about the redress of their wrongs. They wanted a proper enquiry into their financial condition before the increase of taxation. After many tedious and fruitless conferences, when the struggle was reaching a breaking-point and there was danger of the spirit spreading to other parts, the Viceroy and his "strong men" agreed to the conditions asked by the peasants. This was one of the greatest triumphs of passive resistance, and an example of the mass awakening in progress.

Jawaharlal Nehru convened practically the first organised peasant conference during the no-tax campaign of 1930. It was called in an interval between his arrests, and he barely had time to close the meeting when he was rearrested and taken back to prison. It was a conference of *Kisan* delegates only—but there were 1,600 of them, representative of Allahabad district. The project of no-tax was enthusiastically received by the masses, who were absolutely undisturbed by the thought of the *zemindars'* powers over them and the subsequent attempts at terrorisation. Nehru's exhortations infused them with fresh spirit and vigour, while the example of his own sacrifices proved an inspiration



to them. His personal touch with the masses was the secret of the great influence he had over them, and they could always rely on his sympathetic understanding.

He held yet another public meeting of the peasants the same evening, for those of the surrounding villages were anxious to co-operate. Perhaps he had known that his liberty was to be short-lived, and he wanted to achieve as much as possible in the little time left to him; for, as he was returning from the second conference with his wife, he was arrested within sight of his own home and immediately taken back to Naini Prison. His wife returned home alone. This was the launching of the vast movement for national consciousness amongst the peasants, which has spread throughout India. It was the first public sponsoring of their cause, the first attempt to marshal them as forces in the national struggle, to make them articulate before the world.

As agrarian troubles grew to greater intensity in the United Provinces, Nehru did not desist from his work amongst the peasants. He made their cause his own, and he felt for them in the fresh struggles they had to face. His contention was that the rentals should correspond with the prices, and should not be made heavier during the slump. He pleaded and fought for them in every quarter and chafed at the helplessness of his own inability to relieve their sufferings. He asked the peasants to pay what they could, though he knew that even that was too much, with a hope that they would not be dispossessed.

But it was useless; they might as well have saved the money, for ejectments and confiscations followed.

All over the country the summer of 1931 was an ordeal for the Indian peasants such as they had never faced before. They were used to being buffeted by the elements, they were resigned to that, and accepted even death from famine and starvation with their innate philosophy. But man-made trials were extremely difficult for them to bear, and the strain appeared to reach a breaking-point. It was only the help and sympathy of the Congress and their new political education that served to hold them together. The terrific force of their mass unity became a factor formidable to be reckoned with, and was their greatest asset in obtaining greater remissions. Further, having the protection of the Congress, their mishaps and oppression were given publicity in a manner unheard of previously. The brutal ill-treatment of the tenants by the *zemindars* and their agents had hitherto been taken for granted, but it was a significant sign of the times that these were now reported to the Congress for redress. This was the effect of organisation and mass awakening, and a new-born solidarity was their compensation for all the sufferings they had patiently borne. It helped them to hang together and remain obdurate even in the face of utter destitution. This indomitable spirit of the children of the soil was their guide to victory.

These simple rural people, ignorant and illiterate, underfed and ill-nourished, have found real sym-

pathy and inspiration in the Congress. Out of this vast organisation, which in itself represents the nation's ideals and aspirations, the peasants have emerged as a well-drilled and well-disciplined force, forming the Congress vanguard. It has been the work of a lifetime by which they have been lifted out of their mental and physical inertia to a common ground of political education. They have been made to realise that with their welfare is bound up the prosperity of the land, that henceforth there are people who will try to prevent their exploitation and who want their help to organise a proper defence. To them has been unfolded the position and place they will occupy in a liberated India. Having recovered from their amazement that anybody should bother about them, they have slowly shed their chains and united on a common platform. They who have been dumb have found their voices, which rise ominously throughout the country, striking terror into all those who live by oppression. This tide of humanity, hitherto suppressed and imprisoned, has risen above its shackles and tends to flood the entire country with the recital of its grievances. Such a wave has swept through India that will not be checked and bodes no good to those who stand in the way.

The *Kisan Sabhas* are now sponsored by the Left Wing of the Congress, and a series of misunderstandings have led to friction that is most injurious for the working of national affairs. The fault perhaps lies more at the door of the Right, but the Left, due

to lack of foresight, has often deliberately hindered the existing policy of the Congress. In Bihar, now leading in the peasant movement, there has arisen the question of curtailing the civil liberties of the people. *Kisan* demonstrations have been suppressed as being harmful to the peace and tranquillity of the province. This under a Congress régime!

The new Government appears to speak with the familiar voice of bureaucracy! However, it is impossible to crush the voice of the child that has grown out of childhood; one may discipline it, but one cannot stifle it. Therefore the outlawing of the *Kisan Sabha* by the Congress in Bihar was a piece of gross injustice. It looked as though Congress was afraid of listening to the peasants' demands. Fair dealing was in their hands; why try to suppress the movement? The Congress had called it into being, and it was ridiculous now to try to stop it. Any progressive country demands such organisations, which are the voices of the people, and it is beneficial for all that they should be affiliated with the mother institution. One cannot shake off one's responsibilities by cutting off the most troublesome member; the judicious way to deal with the problem is through the Congress itself. There was a definite Agrarian programme drawn up at the Faizpur Congress of 1936, and it was a part of the election manifesto of the Congress. Hence, if the *Kisans* think this has been violated, they are at liberty to voice their doubts. But it is for those who have obtained their ministerial positions at the hands of the people to

justify their actions, not to try and suppress the voice of the people—an impossible task, for the mass is awake, alive and alert, and does not lack efficient leadership. If there has been a want of discipline towards the Congress, it must be brought home to them that a united front is the necessity of the moment, and that a spirit of revolt within the ranks is intolerable. In no way must the spirit of the Congress be violated, but high-handed treatment is both unnecessary and injudicious.

One of the leaders had been censured severely for his deliberate neglect of the spirit of non-violence and passive resistance, as expounded by Gandhiji, for he had advocated the use of *dandas* (batons) in self-defence. He was accused of purposely deviating from the principles of the Congress, with a view to setting up a counter-organisation. He has, however, completely routed his detractors by producing Gandhiji's own words upon the question of self-defence: "But rather than look on whilst your women are dishonoured, you should offer physical resistance to them. . . . You may use force only when the police break into your houses, loot your property and threaten the honour of your women. If a thief comes, do not belabour him to death. . . . Do not use a sword against a *lathi* (stick)."

Speaking of himself and his *Kisans*, this leader of the peasants goes on to say: "I would like to point out that we *Kisan Sabhaites* also claim the right to serve the Congress, the country and mankind. Our honesty and integrity should be recognised . . .

and if some people have erred somewhere, we are not the only sinners."

. These declarations do not seem to specify any desire to leave the Congress fold; nay, a spirit of co-operation and independence seems to be their characteristic.

The peasants of India, who less than ten years ago were nothing better than cattle in their existence and disposition, are to-day being represented in the Peasant Peace Conference in Geneva. They are taking part in every national movement; so far has their political education progressed that they participated in China Day. *Kisan* rallies have become famous, and the unity of their demonstrations has been unprecedented in the history of this land. The order and discipline within their ranks speaks well, not only of those in command, but of those under them. Five thousand peasants gave a display march past at the Haripura Congress recently, and revealed a well-trained and powerful organisation. They have never lost the sympathy of Jawaharlal Nehru, who, in turn, retains his power over them as of old. When thirty thousand of them marched to Lucknow to wait on the Premier of United Provinces, Nehru's gentle words of sympathy and genuine affection ended this demonstration very amicably. His address to them was typical of himself, to the point and devoid of flourishes and gestures. The simple *Kisans* held the message to their hearts and returned home more hopefully than they had ever dared to imagine.

The march of the peasants has become synonymous with freedom, and the Indian *Kisan* is fast progressing along this road. Obstacles will be of no avail to him; he cannot be forced back now. The work ahead of all nationalists—whether Right or Left—is to weld this immense human power into the national struggle for independence. The peasants constitute a majority, whose hardy lives will make of them an invulnerable defence. But those who wield the power must not be hasty in their judgments; consideration and a will to co-operate will achieve wonders with these simple people. Too long have they been cowed; now they are unafraid. They want peace, they have fought too long to wish to court a fight, but, in case of necessity, their courage and will-power have proved indomitable.

## Chapter 15

### THE FUTURE

THE stability of the future of any country to-day is difficult to visualise. European civilisation appears to be rocking upon its foundations, and this has a far-reaching effect even in India. There is no certainty of anything anywhere; even those who have lived in security hitherto, by virtue of money or power, quake in their strongholds. And in India, where events move faster than anywhere else to-day and drift into so many other channels, the future is indeed a matter for conjecture.

Freedom from the British yoke is the immediate goal of the largest section of the country, but there is a very substantial portion of the people who stand aloof from all nationalist movements. This section is composed mainly of ruling princes, who are subsidised by the British, and the capitalist class, who obtain their facilities from the Government. Both these sections of people are so steeped in the luxuries, which European civilisation has brought to them, that they are loath to participate in the struggles for freedom and the consequent sacrifices on their part. Rather do they cling to foreign domination for the protection of their self-interests, regardless of the growing poverty of a potentially rich country. A progressive policy is abhorrent to them, for to them mass progress means the destruction of their power.



What will be India's position should she achieve independence? Not for a moment is it to be supposed that immediately a Utopia will be instituted, or that suddenly the land will blossom forth in plenty. The eradication of the evils of nearly two centuries of foreign domination and exploitation will take great labour and much time. The experimental stage of the new régime is bound to be fraught with defects and must give rise to criticism. It is to be fully expected that the expulsion of the British from India will leave those in authority with many grave problems upon their hands. It has also to be realised that there cannot be immediate satisfaction all round; dissension, discord and dissatisfaction there is bound to be. But there will be the one redeeming feature that it will be the people who will own the country, with no foreign masters to grind them into mere machines and to make them conform to their will.

One of the greatest controversies, one imagines, would be between socialism and democracy. But the regeneration of India lies in socialistic principles, for it is the masses who have suffered and to them must go the power. How far non-violence is to exist with the rapid rise of Fascist Powers all round is another pertinent question. Defence is not against the ethics of non-violence, but aggression and retaliation are. Therefore, armies, as well as naval and air defence, must of necessity figure in the programme of reconstructing India. This will be a difficult task, as centuries of disarming have robbed the people of their powers of resistance. Nevertheless, newer and

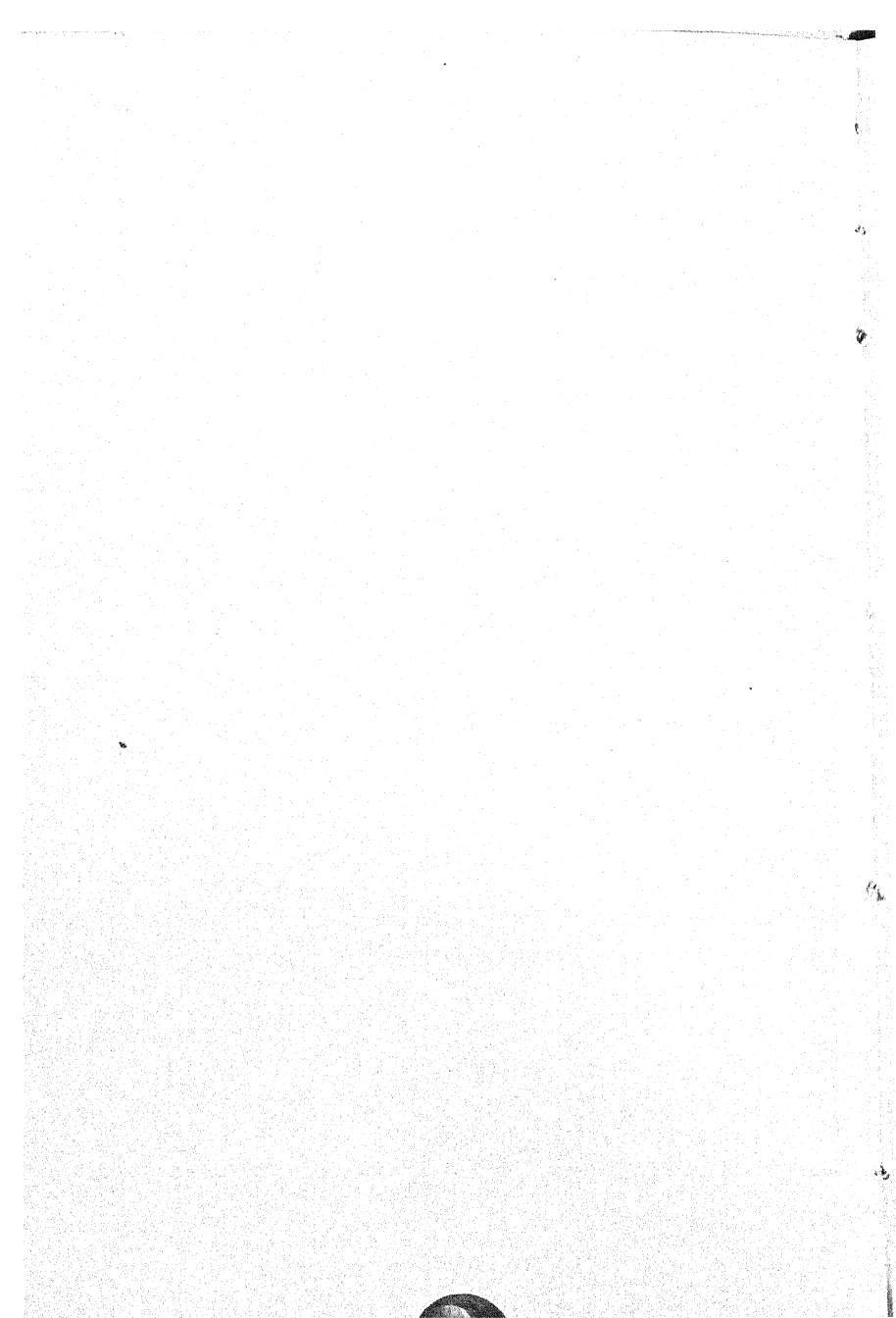
younger men will appear, who have been reared on the spirit of nationalism, and who will bring their youthful enthusiasm to the cause of building up India's defence.

Mr. Jinnah and his Muslims, who speak boldly now of an "Ulster" in India, will definitely add to the complications by creating internal strife. If they would abandon their thoughts of self and combine in creating a State where minorities will be given religious, linguistic and cultural autonomy, they could make an already difficult task less arduous. Their opposition and healthy criticism would help in preventing the evolution of a totalitarian State. Therefore, their co-operation in the right direction will be most valuable, whilst their aloofness and enmity will be more dangerous than that it is now.

In the Anglo-Indian community the British will leave behind a legacy that will be nothing more than an additional burden. It is quite true that the liabilities towards these people are contributory, but they have clung for so long to the skirts of the British and so deliberately alienated themselves from all things Indian that it is difficult for Indians to be patient with them. Yet it is hardly likely that Britain will provide them with a sanctuary, if ever she gives up India. How, then, is India to deal with these people? Most of them are devoid of culture and education and come from the lowest strata of both nations. But this would make little difference had they ever tried to identify themselves with Indians, for then they would have been swallowed up and

become a part of Greater India. Now their lot will be pitiable, for with their "white" complex they cannot possibly fit into the trend of present-day affairs in India. They will provide another problem for those in charge of a national government.

Conjectures such as these may never give place to reality, for the tide of events advances so rapidly that it often carries one into totally different channels. Trying to look forward, peering into the future, is the natural failing of human beings; but there is Destiny which controls all things at her own will. We can but believe that the ideal of the fulfilment of India's great destiny in the affairs of the world is not far distant. More than that is difficult for any mortal to say, for no longer do events move in the same rut as formerly; they are apt to burst all bonds and stray very far.



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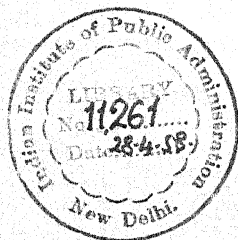
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